



**Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for March 25, 2007  
Released on Wednesday, March 21, 2007**

**"The Way to Love"**

**Printed Text: 1 John 5:1-12**

**Background Scripture: 1 John 5:1-12**

**Devotional Reading: John 17:1-5**

**1 John 5:1-12**

1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

**2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.**

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

**4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.**

5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

**6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.**

7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

**8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.**

9 If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

**10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.**

11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

**12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.**

### **TODAY'S AIM**

**Facts:** to show there is a fellowship of love between God and believers based on a faith that overcomes the sinful world system.

**Principle:** to emphasize that the only way to the love relationship between God and men is to place faith in Jesus Christ.

**Application:** to make it clear that admittance into the family of God will exclude all who refuse to accept His redemptive love.

### **HOW TO SAY IT**

GNOSTICISM. *nahss-tih-sizz-um* (strong accent on *nahss*).

GNOSTICS. *nahss-ticks*.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **The Way to Do It**

"No, here's the way it's done." The father, a skilled craftsman, is teaching his son the right way to do a job. If the youngster is too stubborn to listen, he will be slow to make progress. But if he has confidence in his father's ability and pays careful attention, he will learn his lesson well.

God has tried to teach His children the way of love. At the beginning He provided generously for Adam and Eve. He even allowed them to exercise their freewill choice. Time and again in the history of Israel, He lovingly rescued His people from oppression. When they sinned, He corrected them. When they repented, He forgave them. When they prayed, He opened the windows of Heaven to pour out blessings on them. Most of all, He sent Jesus to die on the cross for them. No greater example of love has ever been known.

We have been shown the way to love. Will we be stubborn, or will we learn?

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

This is the final chapter in John's first epistle, written near the end of the first century ad. The special problem of those who originally received the letter was a heresy called *gnosticism*, or at least an early version of it. This teaching placed little value on faith, love, or obedience. Instead, the gnostics said that secret knowledge was the way to Heaven. (The word *gnosis* means "knowledge" and is found within the English words *diagnosis* and *prognosis*.) As John brings his teaching to a conclusion, he puts all his emphasis on being in the right relationship with Jesus Christ. This includes having love for all God's children.

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## **THE WITNESS OF SUBMISSION TO GOD-1 John 5:1-5**

### **1. What does the phrase "born of God" (1 John 5:1) mean?**

The phrase "born of God." is equivalent to the words "born again" that Jesus used with Nicodemus (John 3:7). Since no one chooses to be born, "born of God" implies the fact that the new birth is not something we achieve but a gift we receive through the regenerating power of God's Spirit (vs. 5,6).

John begins this section with a focus on faith. Anyone who is truly *born of God* will have faith that "Jesus is the Christ" (a title that is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *mashiach* (Messiah), meaning "anointed one." This faith is not merely an idle opinion about Jesus' identity. It involves sincere confession and commitment to Christ (see 1 John 4:2,15). It is a trusting, ongoing faith (as shown by John's use of the present tense in the word *believeth*). True faith is vital for a lifelong relationship with Jesus.

Everyone who has the proper faith relationship with Jesus, within the biblical plan of salvation, is a child of God. John's immediate point here is that every such child should be an object of our love. After all, if we love *him that begat*, then we should also love anyone *that is begotten of him*. We remember what John has just said at the end of the previous chapter: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (1 John 4:20).

### **2. How can someone "believe" and yet not be saved?**

When John spoke of believing in this context, he was not talking about mere mental assent. He meant total commitment to God's Son, for it is possible to have a kind of belief that does not save (Luke 8:13; James 2:19,26). Many claim *they* believe in Jesus simply because they acknowledge that such a man lived on earth and did some amazing things. For John, however, believing is a total trust in Christ as Saviour and Lord that is expressed in obeying His commands.

True faith is also seen in one's willingness to love others who are born again. According to the beloved disciple, there can be no true love for God apart from loving one's Christian brother. As love validates our faith, so a lack of love invalidates it (1 John 3:14; 4:8).

### **3. What is one thing that shows we know and love God (v. 2)?**

For John, this question can be answered quite simply: "when we love God, and keep his commandments."

While some might think John was asserting that a person could earn divine favor by keeping God's commandments, this was not John's point at all. Rather, he was saying that obedience is evidence of saving faith and the new birth. A disobedient faith is contradictory and cannot be called genuine in the sight of God or man (cf. James 2:14-26). We also recall that Christ said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

### **4. What does it mean that God's commandments are not "grievous" (v. 3)?**

Indeed, "his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). The word translated "grievous" could be understood as "burdensome" "and refers to something so heavy that it weighs down a person or breaks him down" (Staton). As our Creator, God knows what

is best for us. It is for both our temporal and our eternal benefit to obey God. Disobedience, in fact, may lead to chastisement for sins committed (Hebrews 12:5-11). Among those who truly love God, His commandments are met with loving submission. We are not prisoners who fear our keeper; instead, we obey as loving children who desire to please our Father.

**5. John says God's commandments are not grievous (burdensome). Without giving prepackaged answers, what would you say to a believer who is struggling with obedience in some area?**

What we say to one who struggles with obedience can depend on the nature of the disobedience: giving up profanity may require a different approach from giving up an adulterous affair. It can also depend on whether or not the person seeks us out for counsel or we seek the person out for godly confrontation.

Modeling holy lives ourselves is a prerequisite in any case. Presenting oneself as an imperfect fellow struggler is also important. At our new birth, the Holy Spirit grants us a new nature that empowers us to obey, yet we know that we still struggle with sin (Romans 7:7-25). But we are not in the struggle alone: we have our fellow believers. God's Spirit changes our hearts, motives, and desires to the degree we allow Him to do so.

**6. What is meant by "the world"? How can we overcome it (vs. 4,5)?**

Another sign of the new birth is the believer's ability to overcome the "world." Of course, "world" is used here as John used it previously when he instructed his readers to "love not the world" (2:15). If we do not overcome the world, the world will certainly overcome us!

How can victory over the world be realized? John declared that our faith is the means through which we can vanquish the world. A weak faith will give in to the world and its allurements. A strong faith, however, provides hope for victory over the world. Jesus said, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). By faith we share in the victory of Christ.

The wording of 1 John 5:5 looks back to the statement made in verse 1, declaring again the importance of putting our faith in Christ. By believing Christ's central claim that He is the Son of God, one commits to accepting His other teachings as true.

Again, believing in Jesus is far more than simply saying that there was such a historical figure as Jesus of Nazareth. Rather, believing that He was God Incarnate is essential to our salvation (cf. 1 John 4:1-3).

**7. The next time you face temptation, how will it help you to know that everyone who is born of God overcomes the world?**

There's nothing more empowering and encouraging than hearing "you can do it," as these verses proclaim. Other Scriptures confirm our ability to triumph over sin. Since we know that God always offers us a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13), we know to look for that escape. Since we know that we are in a battle and that God has equipped us with tools to fight Satan's attacks (Ephesians 6:10-18), we know to prepare for and expect temptations (1 Peter 5:8).

**THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT-1 John 5:6-8**

**8. How did Christ come by "water and blood" (v. 6)?**

Jesus Christ "came by water and blood." The obvious question is what John meant by this. Scholars are by no means agreed concerning the thrust of John's statement.

It was John who told about the water and blood at the time of Christ's crucifixion: "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:34). There John was likely emphasizing the humanity of Christ and thus the truth of His incarnation, namely, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (1:14).

"Water" and "blood" might refer to two significant events in the life of Christ by which He was identified as Messiah: His baptism and His death. In the book of 1 John, the apostle was to some degree addressing the Gnostic heresy that denied the incarnation. Some of these false teachers asserted that the divine Christ came upon Jesus the man at baptism but left before the crucifixion at Calvary. Such a view obviously distorts the truth of the incarnation—that Christ is fully God *and* fully man.

Of course, it was at His baptism that Jesus received the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He was always the Son of God, but it was there at the Jordan that He first was publicly identified as such: "There came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11).

Our text seems to be saying that Christ's baptism (when the Holy Spirit came upon Him) and His willingness to go to the cross testify to the truth of the incarnation. Unlike us, Christ had the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). Since "the Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6), we can be certain that His witness is sufficient to identify Jesus as the Son of God.

## **9. What is the textual question relating to verses 7 and 8?**

Verse 7 is certainly one of the clearest references to the Trinity in the New Testament. However, there is a textual question with regard to this verse, and some Bibles indicate this in a footnote.

The earliest manuscripts of 1 John do not contain the words from "*in heaven*" (v. 7) to "*in earth*" (v. 8). Regardless, verses 7 and 8 do articulate a truth that is taught elsewhere in Scripture, namely, that God has revealed Himself as "the Father, the Word (Christ), and the Holy Ghost" (see Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:10–12; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 3:14–19).

While the Trinity bears witness in heaven, "there are three that bear witness in earth" (1 John 5:8). As mentioned in the comments on verse 6, this is a likely reference to the baptism of Christ, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the death of Christ on Calvary. "By the baptism then received by Christ, and by His redeeming blood-shedding, and by that which the Spirit of God, whose witness is infallible, has effected, and still effects, by Him, the *Spirit*, the *water*, and the *blood*, unite, as the threefold witness, to verify His divine Messiahship" (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Unabridged Bible Commentary*, Zondervan).

These three witnesses were also continuing in the life of the early church through the coming of the Spirit upon believers (Acts 2:1-4, 38-39; Rom. 8:16-17), water baptism upon conversion (Acts 2:41; 8:38; 18:8), and the blood of Christ being remembered when the Lord's Supper was observed (Luke 22:19-20).

## **THE WITNESS OF THE SON—1 John 5:9-12**

### **10. Why is the witness of God greater than man's witness (vs. 9,10)?**

As humans, we often receive "the witness of men," that is, we accept what others tell us to be true. Nevertheless, we know that men sometimes lie or distort the truth. For this reason, "the witness of God is greater," for it is impossible for Him to lie (Hebrews 6:18). The

testimony that we have received concerning Christ is the testimony of God: "This is my beloved Son: hear him" (Luke 9:35).

Those who come to Christ in faith have the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit. He testifies with our spirits that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16). However, as we have already seen throughout 1 John, knowing that one is a true child of God is not merely a subjective experience. John declared, "These things have I written unto you that believe... that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13).

If we reject the "record that God gave of his Son" (v. 10), we are declaring God to be a liar. Those who reject the Bible will one day have to answer to the One who inspired it. The Pharisees diligently studied Scripture but failed to see Christ revealed therein (cf. John 5:39). Likewise, it is possible for people today to know the Bible and miss its main message, which is Christ.

### **11. What did John mean when he said that "life is in his Son" (v. 11)? What is eternal life?**

Thankfully, our heavenly Father has offered eternal life to those who believe, "and this life is in his Son." Eternal life cannot be earned or bought; it is a free gift to be received by faith in Christ.

While "eternal life" is usually understood as our future hope of heaven, John saw it as the present possession of the believer. This life begins as a person comes to know God. It begins when he or she experiences God firsthand and enters a saving relationship with Him (see Acts 2:38; John 17:3). This is the testimony-the promise-of God.

John does not want anyone to be confused in any way by the false teaching they are hearing. Thus verse 12 of our lesson is almost a repeat of John 3:36. John's readers can know this fact for a certainty: *he that hath the Son hath life*. The believer can count on receiving life as the gift from God. But whoever has *not the Son of God* in heart and life should be warned of this fact: he or she has *not life*. The certainty of reward or punishment on Judgment Day is determined by whether or not a person follows Jesus.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **Following the Way**

Jesus is the way. He is God's way, the right way. In fact, He is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him (see John 14:6). If Christianity is criticized for claiming to be the only true religion, it is only repeating the claims of its founder. It may not be politically correct these days to say there is only one way to Heaven, but that is what the church must say to be faithful to her Lord.

Victorious faith enables us to love as Jesus loved. A review of today's text shows us what this includes. Verses 1 and 2 say that we should love all God's family. When Jesus walked this earth, He extended His love to all who would respond to God's call. We follow Jesus in this way of love.

Verse 3 says that we should keep all God's commandments. Jesus became obedient to the point of death on a cross (see Philippians 2:8). Although He was a Son, He learned obedience by what He suffered and He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (see Hebrews 5:8, 9). We remember that following the way of love includes obeying God's commands.

Verses 4 and 5 say that we are to have faith to overcome all this world's opposition. When Jesus faced opposition, He put His trust in the Father. He faced the

temptations in the desert, for instance, by relying on God's Word. He faced the prospect of death on the cross by turning to God in prayer in the garden. We can be more than conquerors through this kind of overcoming faith.

Verses 6 through 10 say that we are to believe all God's testimony. When Jesus quoted Scripture, He showed that He believed it to be true. He used Adam and Eve to establish what is right in marriage (see Matthew 19:4-6). He used Noah and the flood to teach about the second coming (see Matthew 24:37). He used Jonah to teach about His own resurrection (see Matthew 12:40). Jesus accepted these accounts as true. We should have the same view of God's Word as Jesus did: "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

Verses 11 and 12 say that the person of faith will receive God's reward. When Jesus put His trust in God and did as His Father told Him, God raised Him from the dead. He was then highly exalted and given the name above every name (see Philippians 2:9-11).

Today Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father in Heaven. We should take God at His Word and never doubt His promises. Then we will have eternal life in His Son.

### **Prayer**

Father, we thank You for sending Jesus to live on earth as a man and to purchase our salvation. We praise You for the gift of eternal life we have in His name. Help us to have the faith to love as Jesus loved and to overcome this world. In Jesus' name, amen.

### **Thought to Remember**

The way of love is the way to life.

### **Anticipating Next Week's Lesson**

Lessons for the remainder of the quarter are based mainly on texts from the book of Revelation. Texts from Luke and John will also be used for Palm Sunday and Easter. For next week, have your students think about Christ as King. Study **Revelation 1:8; Luke 19:28-38**.

### **Lesson Summarized By**

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