



“Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (I John 5:4).

Claim the Victory by Faith

Central Truth: Faith in Christ assures spiritual triumphs.

L258. Date: February 1990. **Text:** I John 5:1-12. **Topic:** Faith.

Christian duty can be summarized in two words: faith and love. Faith includes all the Christian is to be and do in relation to God. Love includes all the Christian is to be and do in relation to other people. They are two of the three abiding virtues of faith, hope, and love (I Corinthians 13:13).

But heed this word from God: *“Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Hebrews 11:6). It is impossible to begin or to live the Christian life without faith. We move from faith to faith as we grow and serve Christ. The Bible says, *“The just shall live by faith”* (Romans 1:17).

As last week's study dealt with love in the life of the Christian, so this week's study deals with faith.

I. THE MEANING OF FAITH

A. Faith may refer to a statement of doctrine. It is called *“the faith”* when used in that sense. Jude called up that meaning when he besought us to *“earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”* (Jude 3). Paul used *“the faith”* to refer to a system of doctrine when he warned that *“in the latter times some shall depart from the faith”* (I Timothy 4:1). But that is not the meaning of faith in I John 5:1-12.

B. Faith may refer to an understanding and acceptance of religious doctrine. James wrote that the demons have that kind of faith, recognizing the truth of doctrine and trembling at its implications (James

2:19). It would be like a person believing in hell but making no preparation to escape it. But that is not the meaning of faith in I John 5:1-12.

C. Faith may refer to a personal trust in God and in Jesus as the Son of God. That is the meaning in Galatians 3:26. "*Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*" That was the kind of faith Abraham exercised when he believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness (Romans 4:3). There is the element of trust in such faith. It is more than a creed. It is more than mental understanding. It involves a personal trust in God plus surrender to God. That is the meaning of faith in I John 5:1-12.

Someone made an acrostic of the letters F-A-I-T-H. The sentence read, "Forsaking All I Trust Him." There is an element of forsaking plus an element of trusting in faith. In that sense, do you trust God through Jesus Christ?

II. THE EFFECT OF FAITH

First John 5:1-5 states four effects of faith in Jesus. Examine them in the light of your faith. Is your faith biblical?

A. By faith we are born of God. "**Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God**" (verse 1). Jesus came to His own creation and His own people did not receive Him. But as many as received Him received the right to be called the sons of God. And how did they receive Him? By believing on His name (John 1:11-13). It is by faith that we are born of God today.

B. By faith we receive the love of God. (Remember the discussion in last week's study? [L257]) To be saved means that we love God and that God loves people through us (I John 5:1-3). When Christ dwells in your heart by faith you become "*rooted and grounded in love,*" able "*to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God*" (Ephesians 3:17, 19). We receive the Holy Spirit at conversion when we trust Jesus and He fills our hearts with the love of God. So love comes by faith.

C. By faith we overcome the world (I John 5:4-6). Jesus has already overcome and we are in Him by faith (John 12:31; 16:33). We gain the victory in the spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:12, 13) and we go from victory to victory in Christ (II Corinthians 2:14). Rejoice in your victory through Him.

D. By faith we receive the Holy Spirit. "*It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth*" (I John 5:6). Those who do not believe in Jesus do not have the Spirit of God (Jude 19). But each one who believes in Him receives the Spirit (Romans 8:9). So it is by faith that the Spirit

comes to live in us.

Look at the benefits of faith. By faith we are born of God, filled with the love of God, overcome the world, and receive the Holy Spirit. Exercise your faith and ask God to strengthen your power to trust Him.

III. THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH

First John 5:7-11 is a disputed passage. Verse 7 does not appear in some of the ancient manuscripts. Scholars do not agree on the interpretation of the “*witness*” mentioned. But we will take the text at face value and give the interpretation which appears best.

A. Faith is founded on the witnesses in heaven (verse 7). “*The Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost*” are the heavenly witnesses. And they are in perfect agreement.

1. Predestination was the Father's part in salvation by faith. He “*predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself*” (Ephesians 1:5). Predestination does not view the act of choosing or the persons chosen. That is election. Predestination looks to the end result of the choosing. The Father predestinated from eternity that He would adopt children to himself by Jesus Christ. It was His preordained way for sinners to be saved. When we trust Jesus today, we become God's children (Galatians 3:26). His predestined plan makes it so.

2. Redemption was the Son's part in salvation by faith. We are justified freely by faith because redemption is in Him (Romans 3:21-26). God set Him forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood. The saved in every age come to God through Jesus, “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

3. Sanctification was the Spirit's part in salvation by faith. When the repenting sinner trusts Jesus as Savior, the Holy Spirit “*borns*” him into God's family and takes up permanent residence in his human spirit. From that moment onward, the believer is a saint — a sanctified person. He is unique; God's nature remains in him. He is a child of God.

The Father's work of predestination, the Son's work of redemption, and the Spirit's work of sanctification are one great and undeniable testimony that we are saved by faith. What assurance!

B. Faith is founded on the witnesses on earth (verse 8). Those witnesses are the Spirit, the water, and the blood.

The Holy Spirit is an inward witness. He bears witness to the human spirit that the believer is truly a child of God. He assures him that he is saved (Romans 8:16).

The water is an outward witness. It refers to Christian baptism as a witness to the world that a person believes in Jesus and has become a new person by faith.

The blood is an upward witness. It bears testimony to God that the believer has been washed whiter than snow by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God sees it and judgment does not fall upon the person under the blood (Exodus 12:23).

The text says of the Father, Son, and Spirit, "*these three are one*" (verse 7). It says of the Spirit, water, and blood, "*these three agree in one*" (verse 8). Those witnesses are given for our assurance of salvation by grace through faith.

C. Faith is founded on the witness in man (verses 9, 10). The person who trusts Jesus has a witness in himself. God's Spirit bears witness with the believer's spirit that he is assuredly a child of God (Romans 8:16). The witness is personal — "*in*" the believer. The witness is sacred; God's own Spirit in the heart keeps on crying out, "*Abba, Father*" (Galatians 4:6). Such a witness can be trusted as true,

D. Faith is founded on the witness in the Word. John wrote of a "*record*" God has given (I John 5:11, 12). What is that record? It is the written record which we call the Holy Bible. The Scriptures testify of Jesus and of our receiving eternal life through faith in Him. Given by the inspiration of God, that record is inerrant and totally true. No wonder George Keith wrote, "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, / Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word! / What more can He say than to you He hath said, / To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?"

IV. THE OBJECT OF FAITH

The validity of faith does not depend so much on its amount as on its object. Much confidence in the wrong person is tragic. Lesser faith in the right person is effective. Jesus said that faith the size of a grain of mustard seed can move a mountain. Whom do you trust?

A. God's Son is the object of our faith. He came by water and by blood (verse 6). He came by water in the act of baptism at the hands of John the Baptist. There He offered himself to God for His mission on earth, and there the Father testified that He is the only begotten Son of God.

He came by blood in His redemptive sacrifice on the cross (Matthew

26:28). We trust His sacrifice of himself on the cross for our redemption. We trust no other person or thing — only Jesus.

B. God's Son gives eternal life in response to our faith (verse 11). To know God through Jesus is to have eternal life. The discussion is settled by the biblical statement, "*He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life*" (I John 5:12). It is life through faith in Jesus or it is condemnation and wrath because one does not trust Jesus (John 3:36). There are no other alternatives.

C. God's Son dwells in us and we in Him in response to faith. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each believer is a blessed Bible truth. It shows how intimately God is involved in our lives. He is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. Upon His ascension back to heaven and His coronation at the right hand of the Father, Jesus requested and He and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to be the unceasing companion of each believer. That includes you! "*Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us*" (I John 3:24).

Does this study make you appreciate the ministry of faith in the Christian? Do you understand better why God's children are called "believers"? Do you see why without faith it is impossible to please God? If so, strengthen your faith.

Questions for discussion

1. How does Hebrews 11:6 relate to this study?
2. What does it mean to say "*the just shall live by faith*" (Romans 1:17)?
3. What is faith?
4. What assurance do you find in I John 5:1?
5. How are faith and love related in the Christian life?
6. How are predestination, redemption, and sanctification related?
7. How do the three witnesses on earth agree?
8. How is the Bible a foundation for your faith?
9. Why must Jesus be the object of our faith?
10. How can you become stronger in faith?