

# EPISTLES OF JOHN

**Part 5**  
**(I John 5:1-21)**

*A Series of Radio Messages*

*by*

**Manford George Gutzke**

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## I John 5:1-3

In trying to understand the Christian life, it is important to remember that the whole matter of being a Christian begins with the new birth. We know that the word Christian is used to refer to certain people. It is common to suppose that they are called Christians because they are different from other people. There is a sense in which that is true. However, the difference is not in matter of character or personality. Becoming a Christian is not a matter of improving one's self or trying to look like a Christian. It is not even a matter of joining a common program, as I might join a political party or a literary club. I might join the Christian church as I would join a service club, with the idea that I am helping the community. This is not the real meaning of being a Christian. The disciples at Antioch who were first called Christians were people in whom a new life had started. Being a Christian in the Bible sense of the word is being a person in whom a new life has begun. It seems rather strange to talk about being "born again" because we are not used to this term. but it is not difficult to be born again. God does it, and He will do it to *anybody*. However. He does not do it to *everybody*. He does it to those who come to Him through Jesus Christ.

John says in the first verse of the fifth chapter, "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." "Christ" refers to the Old Testament promise of a God-appointed way of deliverance. The Old Testament promised that God would send His own anointed to deliver His people. The word "anointed" and the word "Christ" are the same word. Christ was the one anointed to do a certain task. Christ was God's own Son whom He sent. Through Him God would set up His kingdom. The coming of Christ, the Saviour, was revealed in the Old Testament. Peter said that the prophets knew they were declaring the salvation that God was going to provide. I Peter 1:10, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when he testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Jesus Christ is God's appointed way which He set forth in the Old Testament. Christ was God's anointed, appointed, chosen way of deliverance. The prophets searched in themselves diligently what this meant when they prophesied of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that was to follow. The royal way to life is just this – suffering and then resurrection. The way out of this world is by death and the way into God's world is by resurrection. The Old Testament promise of deliverance was by death and res-urrection. When we use the word Jesus we mean the One that was born of a virgin, whose father was God, who was God Himself Incarnate, who came into this world that He might suffer unto death, who was put on the cross, buried, raised from the dead in the resurrection, taken into heaven in the ascension, who is now in the presence of God, and who is going to return to this world in a great blaze of glory. All of this is in the name *Jesus*. Now whosoever believeth that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ . . . God's chosen way of doing things . . . is born of God.

The verb is not "believed," in the perfect, but "believeth," in the Old English. It is "whosoever believes," or "whosoever is constantly receiving." It is taking what is presented in the Scriptures to be true all the time. "Is born of God" means a person has become a new creature. There is a new life, a different life than what he had when he was born of man. " . . . every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." "Him that begat" is God who begat us by the word of truth. From what John has been saying, "loving God" means seeking to please Him, keeping His word. "Loveth him also that is begotten of him" may refer to Christ Jesus who is begotten of God. It may also refer to other believers. The Christian seeks to help the brethren and share with the brethren. "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." This verse gives us some practical help

. . . assurance about our own conduct. How do we know that we are the kind of person that would actually want to help other Christian people? We know because we love God and keep His commandments. We want to please Him. We want to please Him. We try to be obedient to Him. Our attitude and response toward God is the determining principle. We would not really know by the things we do – our actions. What really shows us that we are in the will of God is that we seek to please Him and obey Him. In other words, being Christian in one's conduct is not decided by planning our activities. We decide as Christians by looking into the face of Jesus Christ. Here is the secret of a Christian's approach to life. Much is being said about how Christian people should act and decide. People talk about how Christians ought to partake in "social actions." There are set out before us certain activities in the neighborhood we are in. or in the state to which we belong, or in the nation as a whole. We are challenged, as Christians, to take part in these activities. However, participation in worthy causes does not prove we love one another. The real determining factor is our attitude toward Jesus Christ. Do we really want to please Him? Do we want to obey Him? That is what is required. Everything else will take care of itself.

Now look at the third verse, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." To keep His commandments is not to spell them all out in order to tell someone what they are . . . or that there are sixteen, fifty-seven, or six hundred and thirteen. Actually, keeping His commandments is a phrase that indicates we seek to do His will. To love God is to keep His commandments, to be obedient to Him. John hastens to say, "And His commandments are not grievous." We do not need to feel that this is an impossible task. The Lord Jesus Himself spoke this same thought when He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). His commandments are not grievous. It is not hard to do His will. He has come and given Himself to us. We turn and give our thanks to Him. Giving our thanks and praise to Him is acceptable. Sharing with other people and giving to other people is acceptable. This is what He would want us to do. If the love of God is in our hearts we will be eager to be obedient. We will want to do His will and we will not be hurt. His commandments are not grievous. What does it mean to be a Christian? To live the Christian life is to begin as a Christian. We start as a Christian by receiving Jesus Christ into our hearts as Savior and Lord.

## I John 5:4-8

Human life begins in this world. Any person that you have seen began life as a baby. A baby is in a world that appeals to him through all his senses. He is enmeshed in a situation where he develops appetite . . . he wants things that feel good. He develops imagination . . . he wants things that are attractive to the eyes. He develops pride . . . self interest. A baby comes this way naturally. It is the normal way in which a human being begins to live. He becomes interested in himself and the things he wants. As a baby develops he looks around and tries to see and touch things. As soon as he can grasp an object he tries to get hold of everything he possibly can. He hangs onto everything he has; regardless of other people . . . he is completely self-centered. He may smile at you very sweetly and do things that are very touching to one's heart, but the moment you cross him you see he does not care about anybody but himself.

This self-centeredness is part of human nature. The Bible speaks of it as being sinful, because it is not like God. Being so preoccupied with the things of self, a man is actually alienated from God. The world presents things which are attractive to us. The world offers us things which look nice to us. The world gives us ways in which we can make something out of ourselves. The world draws us out to be more and more self-centered all the time. The Christian Gospel does not show us how to force the world into being right. The Christian Gospel does not offer any kind of a procedure to make people different than what they are. However, there is something the Christian Gospel has to say about this. In I John 5:4, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." This verse indicates that "born of God" does not mean everybody. "Born of God" has reference to Christian experience. Born again people are people who have been regenerated, who have been given a new life through Christ Jesus. "Whatsoever is born of God, (he who has become regenerated by the grace of God through Jesus Christ) overcometh the world." Those who have been born of God have victory over the world. "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." "Faith" does not refer to faith as a personal exercise of will. It is not that anybody can have faith about anything and thus overcome the world. Faith here refers to our faith . . . our believing in Jesus Christ. This is the way in which we overcome the world.

"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Who is the one that is delivered from the appeals of the world? Who is the one that can get out of the mesh of selfishness and self-centeredness that the world has woven around him? How can anybody get out of that? Who is he that overcometh the world? He that believeth in Jesus the Son of God? This is possible for the man who receives the truth that Jesus of Nazareth was actually God, that He was the Son of God Incarnate. The person who believes that can overcome the world. Receiving the Lord Jesus Christ means the person will take up his cross, will die in the flesh, and then be raised from the dead. In this way he will overcome the world. He will be delivered from the appeals of the world This victory is the key to the whole matter of being a Christian.

The next few verses often seem obscure to many people, but they continue John's description of the work of God in a believer's life. Speaking about Jesus, the Son of God, John says, "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." These words are not big words, but they are strange words. Where we see the word "water" we think of the preaching of John the Baptist. Where we see the word *blood*, we think of the work of Jesus Christ. The person that overcomes the world, who believes that Jesus is the Christ, is the person who believes that Jesus came by water and blood. He came not by water only, but by water and blood. Water is used to wash. When we think of water, with reference to sin, we think of it as the washing away of sin. We can use the word "repentance." When we think of blood we think of the shedding of blood, the Lamb of God, Calvary, and of dying as a sacrifice. We would then

have this complete picture of the Christian Gospel . . . that we not only confess our sins and repent but that also we believe in Jesus Christ.

When we are thinking in terms of repentance, the attitude is turned inward towards self. We repent and then we are forgiven the sins that we have committed. When we speak of the blood we are thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ and His death. The Bible will, in other places, say, repent and believe, and you shall receive the promises of God. So here, believe and receive is an attitude toward Christ Jesus. The person who overcomes the world with faith is the person who, with reference to himself, repents. With reference to Jesus Christ, he believes that Christ Jesus died on Calvary's cross as his own sacrifice. "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness," because the Spirit is truth. The operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart is evidence that this procedure is effectual because the Spirit is given to those who believe.

"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." Ordinarily we speak of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. John speaks of the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost. In John's way he reminds us that Jesus Christ is not only the Son of God, He is also the Word of God. The three persons in the Godhead are all involved in our salvation experience. The Holy Spirit takes the Word of God the Father and makes His promise real to us. "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood." These are in this world. These three agree in one. The water suggests the ministry of John the Baptist. The blood suggests the death of Jesus Christ. The Spirit makes these things real to the heart. In human experience these three elements are involved: the Spirit (which is God dealing with us face to face), the water (which is repentance toward self) and the blood (which is death unto the flesh). These three agree in one. Throughout this passage is the idea that the things of the world . . . the things that appeal to our appetites, our imagination, our pride . . . are too much for us. We are surrounded on every side by things that appeal to us personally. What do we like to eat? What do we like to drink? What do we like to do? What do we like to see? What do we like to have? Finally, we think what fine persons we are, how great we are. All of these things of the world have in them the elements of sin. They lead us away from God. John says in this fifth chapter that the person who overcomes the world is the one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. He commits sin but, as with water, he washes it away by accepting Christ's sacrifice on the cross as remission for his sin.

### I John 5:9-13

The First Epistle of John has been dealing with matters of the Christian faith, life and experience. John continues to emphasize that Christian living is grounded in faith. It is not only a matter of personal attitude but an inward personal commitment in confidence upon a certain promise of God. Faith is taking God at His Word. In particular faith is taking God's Word about Jesus Christ and what God will do for us through Christ. Faith is a human exercise. It is something that we do.

Human beings exercise faith as they trust persons who have offered themselves as something to them. For example, I can have faith in a doctor. I don't have faith in every man as a doctor, but I build up my confidence in a certain doctor. I put my trust, or my faith, in him. It means that I would go to him and let him examine me. I would let him prescribe for me. I would take his medicine. I would submit to his surgery because I have confidence in that man. I can put my trust in a mechanic. My car may not seem to be operating right. It is an expensive vehicle. I don't want anyone to handle it, and I am anxious that a careless person should not handle it. But I can develop confidence in some one man in such a way that I take my car to him with assurance. Or if I can have confidence in a banker. Perhaps I am thinking of negotiating a loan, or undertaking some development of my business affairs which will involve more money than I have. So I go to a banker in whom I have confidence.

Putting trust in God is not any different from putting trust in the doctor, or the mechanic or the banker. Throughout this first epistle of John, John has emphasized that receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will bring results in our lives. These results are God's evidence to us. Because of those results we can have confidence. In I John, chapter five, verse nine, John writes: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." We consider the evidence about a certain doctor, and then we trust him. We consider the evidence about a certain mechanic and then we trust him. We consider the evidence about a certain banker and then we trust him. The evidence that God gives is better than the evidence that any man can give. John is saying that if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ certain results will follow. Just as much as if a boy stepped into a mud puddle, his shoe would get wet. If he fell in the mud puddle his clothing would be muddy. The person who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ will actually be affected. This is the witness that God gives that it is the real thing, and not just make believe.

The ninth verse continues, "For this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son." It is as if John is picking up his whole letter and saying that's what I have been talking about. I have been discussing the fact that God gives you evidence of Himself. If you put your trust in Him, certain results will follow. When God gives you His Son, He puts into your heart the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit in your heart will incline you to put your trust in God, and to want to please Him. This will follow, and this is the witness of it. This is the evidence that you really belong to God.

In verse ten John goes on to say: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." That is, if I believe the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for me, in myself I feel the forgiveness of sin. Someone else may tell me my sins are forgiven, but it becomes real when deep down in my own heart I know it is true. I know that God has forgiven my sins because His spirit "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." If I put my hand in hot water I will know the water is wet and I will know it is hot. Somebody else can tell me it is hot. I may have confidence in him and take his word, but would never know for sure until I put my own hand in the water.

Now with reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, we are to have confidence in Him . . . not because of what someone tells us, but because of our personal relationship with Him. If I receive Jesus Christ in my heart as my Savior and I personally commit myself to Him as the Son of God certain things will follow. I will feel toward God as though He were my Father. I will know with reference to my flesh that my flesh is

to be crucified. I will know with reference to my life that I will want to obey Him. These things will come into my heart if I receive Jesus as Lord. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in Himself."

"He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." Here is a person who, because he received Jesus Christ as Savior, begins to worship God, go to church, pray, and help his fellow man. Someone seeing this change in him might say the man was just good. He might say this was the psychological consequence of certain things the man did. He might say this was the sociological principal that is prevailing in the community where he lived. By not giving God the glory, he is actually making God a liar. Anybody who will not accept the evidence of the results produced in believers as coming from God, is actually denying that God produced the results. There are people who receive the benefits of God and then they either take the glory to themselves or give it to somebody else. I can accept God's forgiveness but not recognize that the forgiveness is because of Christ's death for me. Other people forgave me so I thought God would forgive me. But this is not giving God the glory. If I have the sense of forgiveness following the personal receiving of Jesus Christ as Savior, then I should thank God for it. "He that believeth not God (who does not give God the credit for the results that are seen), hath made him a liar; because he believed not the record that God gave of his Son." The record God gave of His Son is not something printed or written. The record that God gave to His Son is actually what is going on in me. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." If we have the life of God working in us because God has given it to us, we ought to thank God for it and give Him the glory.

"He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." The person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior has the experience of the life of God working in him. This witness is clear. The soul that receives Jesus Christ suffers unto the death of self and is raised in the newness of life. The man who has not received Jesus Christ, has not suffered self denial, and is not raised from the dead. The person who receives Jesus Christ has eternal life in his experience. He has obedience to God. He has love of the brethren. This is a factual demonstration that he can see.

In verse thirteen: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." John has written this whole discussion to give believers assurance that God is working in them so they may enter even more into the grace which is available. It is possible to have assurance. The assurance is on the basis of what happens to you. If God is actually working in your heart and your own conscience bears you witness that you want to obey Him, that you want to do for other people, thank God for it.

## I John 5:14-17

In his First Epistle John has been giving us evidence we can watch to make sure we actually do belong to God. What we have been noticing in I John seems to make it very simple. If we receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord we can tell we actually belong to God because we look on God as our Father. We want to be well pleasing in His sight. In addition, we look upon all men as the creatures of God and we wish them well. We want to let the will of God be done in our lives.

The will of God working in our lives will incline us to deny ourselves, that we might be raised from the dead by the Spirit of God in Christ Jesus. If we once recognize the evidence in our own selves that we really belong to God, it will increase our joy. We will have assurance and assurance will give joy.

This seems to be the main thing John has been writing about in his whole epistle. He wants the Christian people to know how they can tell for sure that they really belong to God so they can have confidence in dealing with God, have fellowship with Him and in the fellowship have joy.

So he says in the thirteenth verse, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." Then he goes on to say that this confidence we have gained can actually make us stronger when it comes to prayer. When we come to God to ask for blessing we are often hindered by a feeling of unworthiness, a feeling of sin. One of the first thoughts that haunts us is the question, Why should I expect God to hear my petition? What ground do I have for thinking that God is going to listen to me? But when we know that God is working in us, that the Holy Spirit is helping us to pray, we turn to God with confidence. When we come to God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, it will be to the glory of God to answer us as we pray. " And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." This confidence in God is that He will answer prayer. Of course the prayer is to be in His will. The prayer is to be something He has encouraged and something He would respect. That is very broad. We can come to Him with whatever we have in our heart.

"Any thing according to His will" is not only so much in the specific things we ask, but the ground on which we come to ask. If we ask God to do things for us for His Name's sake that He might glorify Himself . . . "He heareth us. And if we know that he hear us (if we feel confident that He is hearing us), whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." We are given assurance to think that God will actually do these things.

Some people do not have this confidence. If we were to ask them, "Why wouldn't God listen to you?" their answer might be, "Well actually I am not a good man. I am not a good woman. I haven't done what I am supposed to do. I haven't attended church. I haven't done the various things I ought to have done. It's no use for me to call upon Him."

If I let the feeling of unworthiness stop me from praying, it really means that when I do come to pray I am going to come on the ground that I am a good man. Then I am going to expect God to do for me because I am good. That is not the way it is. Yet that is actually what is seen when I do not pray because I think I am not fit.

Paul writes in Romans 8:26, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." That would say to us that, when we go to pray, of course we don't know what to ask for. We are not good enough to even want the right things. We are not wise enough to want the good things. More than that, we do not have any record to bring. We do not have any grounds on which we are going to ask God to answer us because we are worthy. But we can have confidence that God will hear because when we come to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus (that means trusting in the Lord Jesus), we

can know He is going to hear us. The Lord said in the Gospel of John that if we would abide in Him and He would abide in us, that whatever we asked of the Lord, that is what the Father would do. So we can have confidence that God will actually hear us.

This expression of confidence is all the more meaningful when we look at verse sixteen of I John 5. This is one of the most challenging promises in the whole Bible . . . and one of the most demanding. "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." Then there is another sentence. "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it." We speak of this as the unpardonable sin. However, most of the actions we count as sins are not included. Most of the things we feel ashamed of are not unpardonable sins. Most of the things we deplore in our own children and loved ones are not unpardonable sins. The expression, "the unpardonable sin" occurs in the Bible and, as far as I know, the only one who speaks of it is John. This does not mean it is not true. It means that John is the one to turn to in order to get the actual meaning.

The "unpardonable sin" might appear to be the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. What is the Holy Spirit trying to do with us? Is it not true that the Holy Spirit is trying to show us the things of Jesus Christ so that we will receive them? The Holy Spirit is trying to get us to put our trust and confidence in Jesus Christ and commit ourselves to Him. If we deny that, refuse to believe that, we have cut ourselves off from everything. It is as if I were to bring a bottle of medicine to someone and say, "This medicine will cure anything you have but one thing. There is one action on your part that this medicine cannot cure . . . that action is if you don't take it." All our sins are before Him. "The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." In all of this sin which the Lord Jesus can cleanse there is one that He does not cleanse . . . the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ. Apart from that, we can say that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

Verse seventeen says: "All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death." The sin unto death is most of the sins you know. In this passage we have seen we can have assurance God will hear and answer us when we pray. Then comes this remarkable promise if we see a brother that is sinning, we can ask for him and God will actually forgive him. This promise will certainly keep some of us Christian people praying again and again.

## I John 5:18-21

We come to our last study in the First Epistle of John. Throughout this epistle John has been laboring to make clear the true meaning of Christian living. Many people are inclined to think being a Christian is something you do, the way in which you act outwardly. They watch a man walking down the street . . . he walks like a Christian. They see a man in business . . . he acts like a Christian. They hear a man talking . . . they say he talks like a Christian. If the way we act makes us a Christian then most of us would get discouraged because we cannot ever do what we ought to do. A great deal of confusion comes from this idea.

We do not become a Christian by looking like one. We become a Christian in a very simple way – by receiving Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. John is talking about the Christian life in this sense throughout his whole epistle. He is pointing out the great truth in Jesus Christ . . . that God Himself has come into human flesh to save the children of men by delivering them from sin through death and by bringing them into eternal life through resurrection. This is the Christian way, dying in the flesh to live in the spirit.

We see in I John 5, verses 18-21 that John strikes certain chords of assurance. There are certain things he knows and we can know for sure. John wrote the whole epistle so we could be sure we were Christians. He sums it up and says in conclusion, "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." This is the confident statement made by John about people who are born of God. Whosoever is born of God (whosoever has in him the life of God working in him because he has received Jesus Christ as his Savior) sinneth not. This does not mean that the individual at anyone time never does anything wrong. It means he does not practice sin. It is not in his mind to do the things that are wrong in the sight of God. If he falls into them from old habits, that is one thing. If he stumbles into them because of his weakness, that's another thing. If he wanders into sin because he does not know any better, that is still something else. But his heart and his mind and his conscience will have to bear witness that he does not want to go contrary to God. This will be the condition of a person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

John has argued in his epistle, the reason the Christian does not practice sin is because "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." The Lord Jesus Christ is actually alive today and is actively related by His Holy Spirit to those who believe in Him. He will gain the victory in each of our souls. If we personally have received Jesus Christ as our Savior, God has seen to it that a new life has begun in us. The new life in us wants to please God. If I do not have in me a desire to be well pleasing in the sight of God, I do not have the evidence that I belong to Him. Just as surely as I belong to the Lord and put my trust in Him, a desire to please God will follow. "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not" is like saying we know perfectly well that anybody that falls in the water will get wet.

"But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself," means he controls himself, or guards himself. He restrains or denies himself. The Apostle Paul says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." When he denies himself and controls himself, the next thing follows: "That wicked one toucheth him not." This means that Satan cannot get any foothold in him to tempt him. Satan cannot have any success in tempting him. Why not? Because Satan tempts me with the things that I in my human nature like. He comes to me in one avenue or another in my human nature and appeals to me to do the thing that is pleasing to myself. But if I keep myself, if I guard myself, if I restrain myself, if I deny myself, if I put myself under subjection, if I reckon myself dead; then Satan cannot get an approach to me. Those things which would be open to him and susceptible to him, I am actually reckoning dead. "That wicked one toucheth him not." He is not able to entice him because the man has reckoned himself to be dead.

Verse nineteen says, "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." The Christian consciousness of the indwelling Spirit is such that we know that we are of God. We know we are inwardly moved by the Spirit to want to do the will of God. Our actions are motivated with a desire to be well pleasing in His sight. At the same time, we know the whole world in which we live lies in wickedness. The common practices which are endorsed by the public and are popular by the public are self centered. John warns us of this fact and reminds us that in the world the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are in operation. People do the things they like. They do the things that look good. They do the things that their pride prompts them to do in self centeredness. This is the situation in the whole wide world. However, Christian people are not like that. Christian people in themselves are motivated by the Holy Spirit to remember the things of Jesus Christ. By the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are inwardly moved to obey God at whatever expense it is to themselves.

Verse twenty says, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." John, as it were, summarizes the whole thing. We are conscious of the living Lord Jesus Christ, and in that awareness, we are able to discriminate what men teach. The "him that is true" does not only refer to the Lord Jesus Christ. It means we can discriminate with people. We can tell which is which. We can tell the men that are telling the truth and the men that are not telling the truth because the Son of God has come. The person who is conscious of the fact of the Lord Jesus Christ, and refers everything to Him will have an inward unction which will enable him to tell whether men talking are talking the things of the Lord, or whether they are talking the things of themselves. We have this inner understanding that is given to everyone of us.

Several times in his epistle John has talked about this. He has said, for example, that the man who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has the witness in himself. The person knows from within himself the evidence is there. "The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true." Our relationship is with God in reality, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. His Son, Jesus Christ, is the one that is true. He is the one that is actually the real truth of God. In his Son we accept the life of God given into our hearts the way He gave His life into the body of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus, remember, suffered in the flesh to live in the Spirit. He suffered unto death that He might be raised from the dead. Christ is the eternal plan of God promised in the Old Testament. So we believe this whole thing about Jesus Christ. We suffer unto death in order that we might be raised from the dead and live forever. This is the truth about God and God's ways. This is actually how eternal life operates in us.

Finally, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Do you wonder why this is tacked on at the end? Do you wonder why it is just off here by itself? Yet It has a very important meaning. This is a warning. Idols are what men make. Men make these in their concepts of God. Keep yourself from human ideas. Keep yourselves from ideas that men think about. They do not know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. They try to figure things out and they make up their own minds. They offer ideas of their own about God. Keep yourselves from this practice. These ideas may have fragments of truth, but they do not bow down to the head of the church, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Keep yourself away from them.

## Victory That Overcometh

We have come to the end of our study of the First Epistle of John. In the course of this whole study we have been conscious that the author is dealing with Christian living. He is seeking to present it in such a way that we can understand it better. He has declared the truth in the Gospel of Jesus Christ so that we who believe can have fellowship with God, with the Lord Jesus Christ and with other believers. In this fellowship we can have joy. This is John's purpose. The course of Christian experience is not simple. Many complications are possible. Usually it is along the line of being deceived, of being led into unfruitful experience.

Perhaps it would be helpful if we can keep in mind that living a Christian life is actually like being in a war. It involves a spiritual conflict. We actually have to battle, as it were, because of the situation we are in. We are like a fish in a stream of running water. If the fish did not swim it would be swept down stream like any other piece of driftwood. The fish has to do a certain amount of swimming just to stay where he is because the current of the water would carry him out. Living in this world is a constant fight. There is a constant struggle against the forces that would lead us away from God. We do not have daily help from the world about this matter. In fact, things happen to distract us, to mislead us, to frustrate us in such a way that it is always a wonder that we make it at all. We would not except for the help of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we come to the end of this epistle where John speaks of the victory that overcometh the world in chapter 5, verse 4. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the son of God?" All men were created by God to live righteously. The creation of the world and man was not by chance, nor impersonal natural process. God created the heavens and the earth, and God created man. The kind of God who created man is the God we know . . . the God of the Bible. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God did not create man so man could go out in the world and enjoy himself. God did not create man so he could invent something or could paint a picture or write a poem or build a fortune or run a government or have an army. That is not why God created man. God created man to live in His will.

Man was to be a creature in the image of God, having certain liberties and privileges of choice. We know what happened, but let me point out to you what was involved. The law of God is grounded in the nature of God. God did not make the law up as a special trick. It was not something He just set out in an arbitrary fashion. The law requires man to live in a certain way acceptable to God. The word love could be used to describe this way of living. There are two great commandments. The first – Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. The second, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. They can be stated differently and in this fashion. Man is to live in obedience to God and man is to live in love for other men. This is true for everybody. You do not have to be a Christian for this. Any time you see a man living his life selfishly, not interested in other people, or addicted to the things of this world, you are looking at a man who is not doing God's will. The right word for that is sin. That person is living in sin and "the wages of sin is death." The nature of man is such that he is prompted to self interest which is not of God. It is sin. What the law of God requires can be described by the word light. The nature of man can be described by the word darkness. Darkness is absence of light. Light is like God. Darkness does not have anything of God in it. God is as He is and therefore requires what He does. He judges man according to what He has in mind. Man is as he is and is not doing the will of God . . . he is sinful. Another factor is that Satan is active to tempt man to serve himself through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Satan tempts man through the world in the form of appetite, in the form of imagination and in the form of appeal to his

vanity.

Into this situation where "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," where "there is none righteous, no, not one," God sent His Son in human form to provide a way of salvation for us. He "took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man." Jesus Christ did the will of His Father. In obeying His Father He loved His brethren. He loved them to the point where He died for them. God is going to judge the whole world by the righteousness of that man whom He hath ordained . . . the Lord Jesus Christ. You and I are going to stand in the presence of God, as is every other human being on the face of the earth. Everyone will stand in the presence of God and be judged. The standard of judgment, the measuring yardstick, will be the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This righteousness aroused His opponents to the point where they put Him to death. Christ Jesus not only died for us but was resurrected and taken up into heaven, then shed forth His Holy Spirit into believing hearts. The Holy Spirit of God coming into the human heart, activates in the believing heart, the will of Jesus Christ. The believer is moved to keep His word. The believer finds in him the disposition to keep the commandments, listen to God and to love the brethren. This is exactly the way the Lord Jesus Christ is and this is the pattern that reappears in those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Satan tempted the first man, Adam, so Satan tempted the second man, Jesus Christ. Adam was deceived, but Jesus Christ resisted Satan and overcame him. Who knows how many times in the course of His earthly career Satan tempted Christ. When Jesus had told His disciples that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and He would have to go to Jerusalem to be killed but would be raised from the dead, Peter spoke up and said, "Be it far from thee Lord." The Lord Jesus turned and rebuked Peter, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Satan was trying to tempt Jesus Christ not to obey God. So he will tempt the believer today. The Lord Jesus overcame Satan at Calvary. You will recall that when He was going to the cross to be crucified, He told His disciples that He saw Satan falling from heaven. Satan was actually losing his position because he was going to lose his conflict with Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ did not overcome Satan by controlling Satan. He did not overcome Satan by stopping him or by changing him. He overcame Satan by yielding Himself into Satan's hands and letting Satan effect His death. All Satan could do was to bring Christ to His death, so He died. Then God raised Him from the dead, in the newness of life, in a life that Satan could never touch. This is the way of victory for us. The victory that overcometh the world is the victory that we have by faith in Christ Jesus. The victory comes by committing ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ and going through the same spiritual procedure He went through. We reckon ourselves to be dead. As far as the desires of appetite, of imagination, and of vanity and pride, a man reckons himself to be dead. A dead person has no interest in what feels good. A dead person has no interest in what looks good, and a dead person has no pride. He is dead. This is what is to be characteristic of Christians. Christians are to yield themselves unto death. Then God raises us from the dead into newness of life. This is a pattern the world does not understand. The world says self preservation is the first law of nature, but we know it is not the first law of spiritual life. We know the first law of the spiritual life is, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." We reckon ourselves to be dead. In this conflict against evil all around us, the procedure of the Lord Jesus Christ is not to tackle this in the sense of trying to make the evil person do the right thing. Trying to make evil into good is like going out and blowing against the wind. It is useless.

The experience of Moses illustrates the uselessness of trying to make evil into good. When Moses was forty years of age he went out to see how his brethren were getting along. He saw an Egyptian taskmaster abusing a Hebrew servant. Moses went over and interfered. The result was the Egyptian was killed. The next day Moses saw two Hebrew brothers quarrelling with each other. He tried to get them to stop quarrelling and one asked him, "Intendest thou to kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian?" Moses knew then that his killing of the Egyptian was understood and because of the tension that there was between the Egyptians and the Israelites Moses had to flee Egypt. What Moses saw really was wrong. The Egyptian

was abusing the Israelite. He saw two Hebrews quarrelling with each other. Moses did what is such a temptation. He went over and told them not to do it and to do the right thing. When you tell an Egyptian not to do what he is doing but to obey the God of Israel, you find the Egyptian will resist. The man in the world does not want us telling him that he is wrong and that he ought to make something of himself. Christian people are not called to control the world. The procedure is not that we make the unbelieving person do the right thing, but that you and I do the right thing. What would the right thing be? We yield ourselves into the hands of God and do God's will.

It is like a person crossing a lake. He cannot go through it because the water would drown him. Shall the man stop the waves rolling or stop the storm coming up? Is that sensible? What could he do? One thing he could do is get a watertight boat and ride over the lake. It is surprising how deep the water can be if you ride on top of it. It won't do you any harm if you ride in the boat. This is the Christian's way of living as far as the world is concerned. We live in the boat and all about us there is a flood of evil tidings. We live in Christ Jesus and as such we ride over the top of these waves. But notice, we do not have peace and success in our trip because we manage the waves. We have peace because we have a boat that takes us through the waves. It is not that we control the world, but we reckon ourselves to be dead. We disengage ourselves from the world. The world is no longer able to appeal to us. God Himself works in us and sets us free, "and this is the victory that overcometh the world." When the Christian is facing all the situations around him, he does not get so strong that he is able to do his own will. He does not get to be so good that he always does the right thing. He does not get to be so wise he knows which thing to do and which to leave undone. No, but he comes to have faith in God. The Christian person, believing in God, commits his soul and his fortunes to God. This is what we have in First John. The Christian person is encouraged to yield himself to the will of God, to seek to do God's mind, to keep His Word. He is encouraged to love other people. God Himself will then raise us from the dead. I have talked about this in a general way. Some of you who are listening to me will have this right in your own homes and you wonder how you can do there. Commit the situation to God. Yield yourself to whatever the situation demands and be faithful in your service there. Trust in God. God is able to overrule anything in our lives and bring His Will to pass. If we ever have anything it is because God is able to give it to us. Let us keep walking in the Lord, trusting in Him and knowing that He is able to overcome the world.