

**“The Great Appeal:
Believe in Christ”**

INTRODUCTION: The apostle John wrote this marvelous letter to the Church of Ephesus and the churches of Asia Minor...

1. Circa 95-98 AD; probably the last addition to the New Testament (Bible)
2. Why? *To counter the Cerinthian Gnostic Heresy* that was disturbing and dividing the church.
 - a. *Gnostics* from the Greek Word *gnosis* (knowledge). Gnostic thought of themselves as the “enlightened ones”
 - b. They referred to themselves as *pneumatikoi*: “the spiritual ones.”
 - c. **John Stott** explains the background of First John (*The Letters of John: TNTC*; p. 49).

The controversy which John’s letters reflect, however, concerns the doctrine of the incarnation rather than that of creation. Those proto-Gnostics who believed that matter was evil were obsessed with the problems raised not just by the world in general but by the body in particular. They were immediately in difficulties with the Christian religion because it is such an essentially ‘material’ religion. It asserts that the Son of God clothed himself with a body, and that the Christian’s body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. What could they make of the body of Christ and of the body of Christians? We have already seen that they denied the former. They did not deny that the man Jesus had a body, but that the Christ was to be personally identified with the bodily man Jesus. They could not conceive how the ‘Christ’ could have become incarnate, still less have assumed a body subject to suffering and pain. As for the Christian’s body, it was fundamental to their thought that the body was a base prison in which the rational or spiritual part of human beings was incarcerated, and from which it needed to be released by gnosis, knowledge. They believed in salvation by enlightenment. This enlightenment could come by the imparting of an esoteric knowledge in some secret initiation ceremony.

3. These Gnostics had three problems: theological, ethical, relational.
 - a. Theologically: They denied that Jesus was God Incarnate and were therefore unconverted.
 - b. Ethically: They had a low view of holiness and were thus both carnal and immoral.
 - c. Relationally: They looked down on the typical Christian and were unloving to them.
4. Hence, John’s three-fold emphasis on *Incarnation, Holiness and Love*.
5. His solution? **Genuine, life-changing faith in Jesus Christ!**
 - a. The Central Truth: *God is Light*
 - b. The Primary Command: *Love One Another*
 - c. The Key Counsel: *Abide in the Spirit*
 - d. The Core Teaching: *Jesus Christ is God Incarnate*

- e. The Foundational Imperative: *Love Because God Loves Us*
 - f. The Great Appeal: *Believe in Jesus Christ*
6. Three times, in this *Great Appeal* for faith, John mentions “believing” in Jesus Christ.
- a. Each occurrence introduces a new thought about another reason for putting our faith in Jesus Christ.
 - b. And each statement directly contradicts one of the three main errors of Gnosticism: theological, ethical, relational.
 - c. *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.* (1 John 5:1)
 - d. *Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* (1 John 5:5)
 - e. *Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.* (1 John 5:10)
7. John is saying this: If we believe in Jesus Christ (and therefore receive the gift of the abiding Holy Spirit, then...
- a. *We will overcome the world, not by denying the world as the Gnostics did, but by the love God puts in our hearts and by a holy life.* (5:1-4)
 - b. *We will come to know God not by an esoteric knowledge but by the witness of God Himself; by revelation made to us by three witnesses: the Spirit, the water, the blood.* (5:5-9)
 - c. We will be saved and given eternal life not by some special and supernatural ceremony that makes us *pneumatikoi*, but by trusting in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (5:10-12)
8. Again, John’s *language* betrays his purpose:
- a. Three times he points to believing in Jesus Christ
 - *Jesus is the Christ (5:1)*
 - *Jesus is the Son of God (5:5)*
 - *The Son of God (5:10)*
 - b. Of the ten occurrences of *pistis* (faith) *pisteuo* (believing) in 1st John: 7 uses are in this 5th chapter.
 - c. Finally: John uses the word *marturia* (witness) and the verb *martureo* (to testify or give witness) or *memartureo* (to bear witness together) a total of 10 times in 5:6-12.
 - d. *Incarnation...believing...witness* – these are John’s keys to a **Life of Saving Faith**.
9. **John Stott:** *Letters of John: TNTC; p. 174.*

We have by now become familiar with the three tests which John applies, with repeated but varied emphasis, to the professing Christian. In ch. 2 he describes all three tests in order, obedience (3-6), love (7-11) and belief (18-27). In ch. 3 he treats only obedience (2:28-3:10) and love (11-18), while in ch. 4 only belief (1-6) and love (7-12). In 4:13-21 he has combined the doctrinal and social tests. Now, however, in the brief opening paragraph of ch. 5, we meet the three together again. The words ‘believe’ and ‘faith’

occur in verses 1, 4 and 5, 'love' in verses 1, 2 and 3, and the need to obey or carry out 'his commands' in verses 2 and 3. What John is at pains to show is the essential unity of his threefold thesis. He has not chosen three tests arbitrarily or at random and stuck them together artificially. On the contrary, he shows that they are so closely woven together into a single, coherent fabric that it is difficult to unpick and disentangle the threads.

I. FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST EMPOWERS US TO BE GODLY (1 John 5:1-4)

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (1 John 5:1-4)

1. Here is John's first statement about believing in Jesus Christ.
2. **The First Test:** If we believe in Jesus Christ, we will love other Christians and obey God's commandments.
3. Here is John's faultless logic: If we put our faith in Jesus as the Christ (Messiah; Savior; Redeemer) then...

- a. We prove that we are "born again" (*born of God*)

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:1-5)

- b. If we are born of God, we will love God as our Father.
- c. If we love God as Father, then we'll also love His other children (*whoever has been born of Him*) – our fellow Christians.
- d. When we keep God's Commandments, we show our love for God and our brethren.
 - i. Commandments 1-4 – love for God
 - ii. Commandments 5-10 – love for others
 - iii. *Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:8-10)*

- iv. *For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”* (Galatians 5:14)
 - e. Keeping God’s commandments is not a burdensome duty.
 - i. *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.* (1 John 5:3)
 - ii. It’s not *easy* to obey God’s Law.
 - iii. But for the one who loves God and others, it is not a *burden*.
 - f. **The Old Movie:** *“He ain’t heavy; he’s my brother”* (Boy’s Town)
4. **Illustration:** Men and women, in love and married, know what this means...
- a. A woman goes through pregnancy, painful labor, relentless nursing, dirty diapers, endless meals and house cleaning, discipline, tutoring, etc....*But if you ask her, “Is this a burden to you?”, she says, “Not really, I love my family!”*
 - b. A man marries his girlfriend. He takes a job to support her and the children – a job he often dislikes. He denies himself the things he wants to own because he has bills, taxes, tuition and savings he must pay. He is faithful to family when he could be “footloose and free.” He sacrifices and serves his family, as Christ does the church (Ephesians 5:25). *Why? Not because he has to but because he wants to. It’s not grievous to do so; it’s his privilege. He loves his little family!*
 - c. The same is true for pastors in churches; soldiers and their country; presidents and the nation; teachers with their students; policemen and citizens; coaches and players; others who *love*.
 - d. **Love turns duty into privilege and burdens into opportunities to show one’s love to others.**
5. Remember what we said last Sunday night: *John’s substitute word for grace is “love”; love is grace in action.*
6. **Charles R. Eerdman:** *The General Epistles: 1st John: pp. 175-176.*
- “His commandments” he affirms, “are not grievous.” They are not too hard to obey; they are not unreasonable in their demands; for he gives the grace needed for their fulfillment. Of course difficulties are involved; effort is required; John does not deny this. Any man who resolves to obey God will have continual opposition. “The world” does not love God or his commandments; its maxims, its principles, its ideals, its spirit, are all contrary to his will. For the Christian, conflict is certain; but victory is likewise assured; the divine energy imparted by God is mightier than the power of the world.*
7. So, John talks about *“overcoming the world.”*
- a. *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.* (1 John 5:4)
 - b. *“overcoming the world” = “living a holy life”*
 - c. A life of keeping God’s commandments
 - d. Our *faith* in Christ is the power to outlast opposition, within and without, and live for God and others.

- e. The process is irrefutable: faith...born again...love for God and others...keeping the Commandments...overcoming the world.
 - f. *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17)*
8. We've already heard this before; from Paul...
- a. *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died – more than that, who was raised – who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:26-39)*
 - b. *"more than conquerors through Him who loved us"*
 - c. *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. (1 John 5:4)*
9. John gives us some great *pastoral advice*: If we have trouble keeping God's commandments in one or two areas of life...
- a. Sabbath-keeping, control of temper, lusts, abuse of food, materialism, jealousy, judgmentalism, ingratitude...
 - b. The answer is truly simple: *In that aspect of our spiritual life with God we still love our sins more than we love Jesus because we think they give us something Jesus lacks or cannot give.*
 - c. As we grow in our **faith** in Christ, we'll **love** Him more and obeying Him in that area of weakness will no longer be *burdensome*, but a joy!
 - d. *"Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey..."*

II. FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST RECEIVES THE REVELATION OF GOD (1 John 5:5-9)

Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. (1 John 5:5-9)

1. Here is John's second statement about believing in Christ...

Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:5)

2. And faith receives the Jesus who **really is**; not the one we'd like Him to be.

a. *This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. (1 John 5:6)*

b. The Jesus Christ revealed in the Gospels and their narrative – the *Revelation of God*.

c. **John Stott:** *The Letters of John: TNTC; p. 179.*

There can be little doubt that John was using phraseology which was already familiar to his readers, either through his own teaching or through that of the false teachers, and which is not so readily understood by us.

3. John states that we can be certain that Jesus is the Christ because *three witnesses* testify to this fact.

a. **Remember:** It took 2 or 3 witnesses, in Jewish law, to establish a true testimony and prove a fact

i. *A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. (Deut. 19:15)*

ii. *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. (Matthew 18:15-16)*

iii. *This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. (2 Corinthians 13:1)*

b. And here are the three witnesses to Christ: *The Spirit, the water and the blood*.

4. John is remembering what Jesus said...

a. *Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Who ever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true." Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the*

one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.”
(John 8:12-18)

- b. *If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. (John 5:31-40)*
- c. **Five** witnesses borne to Jesus: *John the Baptist, Jesus’ miracles, God the Father, the Holy Scriptures, Jesus Himself*

5. John mentions **three witnesses** to the divinity and incarnation of Jesus:

- a. *This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. (1 John 5:6-9)*
- b. These are three historical ways to interpret “Water and blood”
 - i. Calvin and Luther: The two sacraments. But “blood” is usually not the way we refer to the Lord's Supper.
 - ii. Augustine: The spear thrust into Jesus’ side while on the Cross. But the blood followed by water is not how Jesus *came* to us.
 - iii. A third option is best: *It sets forth two historical events, at the start and finish of Christ’s ministry, by which He came to us as God the Redeemer in the flesh.*
- c. First: The *water* of baptism and the witness of God –
 - i. *Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Luke 3:21-22)*
 - ii. Note: the *Spirit* descended on Jesus
 - iii. God the Father bore testimony: *“This is my beloved Son!”*
 - iv. *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.” And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I*

myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.'
(John 1:29-34)

- d. Second: The *blood* of Christ's crucifixion and atonement.
 - i. *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.* (Matthew 26:26-28)
 - ii. *And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"* (Matt. 27:50-54)
 - iii. The witness of God in tearing the Temple curtain
 - iv. The witness of the Holy Spirit who moved the Roman Centurion to proclaim: "*Truly this was the Son of God.*"
6. Of course, these three witnesses, the Holy Spirit, water and blood, are **symbolized** and **used by** God in the Lord's Supper and baptism as a testimony to Jesus Christ.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
7. The Gnostic heretics accepted that Jesus was a great spiritual leader, even the Messiah, but not the Son of God (Christ).
 - a. They may have acknowledged His baptism.
 - b. They did not consider His death on the Cross redemptive.
 - c. So John emphasizes the importance of the incarnation, both in Christ's baptism and death.

This is he who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. (1 John 5:6-8)
 - d. Holy Spirit speaking through the Gospel narratives
 - i. *And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.* (1 John 5:6b)

- ii. *If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. (1 John 5:9)*

8. John directly **repudiates** the Gnostic fallacy –

- a. We know Jesus Christ as God **not** by esoteric knowledge but by *God's Revelation*.
- b. We possess God's saving grace by embracing Jesus as the Christ and **not** by some secret ceremony.
- c. We truly became *pneumatikoi* (spiritual ones) **not** by initiation into a cult, but by believing the Spirit's witness!
- d. *Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written,*

*“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—*

these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:6-16)

9. **Application:** We are surrounded by 21st century Gnostics...

- a. “Let me tell you what I believe God is like...”
“Here is what Jesus means to me, personally...”
“God spoke to my spirit and told me something unique...”
“You don't have to be baptized to be a Christian!”
“I commune with God through nature, not in a church and by reading the Bible...”
- b. Our answer: *“Nonsense! A person only knows the true God, only possesses Christ, and only hears from the Holy Spirit when they respond to the Spirit's witness in the Word concerning the historical, divine, incarnate Christ, seen in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and the witness of the apostles in the New Testament!”*
- c. *“And **this** is He who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ...”*

10. True saving faith is impossible apart from the Spirit's testimony in the Bible!

III. FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST EMBRACES THE GOSPEL (1 John 5:10-12)

Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. And this is the testimony, that 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. (1 John 5:10-12)

1. This is John's third and final statement about believing in Christ.

- a. *Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. (1 John 5:10)*
- b. Simply put: *If we believe and accept the testimony about Jesus Christ in the Gospels, then this truth abides "in" us.*
- c. But if we do not receive the Gospels as true: *Then we call God a liar because we haven't believed His witness.*
- d. **The key truth:** A true Christian will accept the Holy Scriptures, and especially the Gospel account, as the *Word of God*
- e. i.e., God speaking personally and directly to us!

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

2. What is that "testimony?" Eternal life in Jesus alone!

- a. *And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (1 John 5:11)*
- b. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. (John 1:1-4)*
- c. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."* (John 3:16-21)
- d. *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears*

my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. (John 5:19-29)

- e. *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. (John 5:39-40)*
 - f. *This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” (John 6:50-51)*
 - g. *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (John 10:10-11)*
 - h. *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (John 10:27-29)*
 - i. *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)*
 - j. *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)*
 - k. *And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:3)*
 - l. *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)*
3. To believe in Jesus Christ is to possess **“the life”** = eternal life; the Life of God in the soul of man!
 4. Here is yet another one of John’s black ‘n white statements:
 - a. *Whoever has the Son has (the) life...*
 - b. *Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have (the) life.*
 - c. *He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. (1 John 5:12 NASB)*

5. **Keaton Lee Scott: Joy to the Heart (lyrics)**

Look there! The Christ, our Brother, comes resplendent from the gallows tree and what he brings in his hurt hands is life on life for you and me.

Good Jesus Christ inside his pain looked down Golgotha's stony slope and let the blood flow from his flesh to fill the springs of living hope.

Good Jesus Christ, our Brother died in darkest hurt upon the tree to offer us the worlds of light that live inside the Trinity.

6. This faith in Christ is **not** either
 - a. ...a mere intellectual assent to the truth of Jesus
 - b. Nor is it a once-upon-a-time “asking Jesus into your heart” deal.
7. To *have the Son* is to own Him, possess Him, make Him your own, follow Him, live with Him and for Him, obey Him as Lord, trust Him as Savior, become like Him over time.
8. **Robert Yarbrough:** *1-3 John: ECNT; p. 290.*
 - a. *To “have” the Son is to trust in him continuously. This life has an eschatological fulfillment but is also a decisive element of believers’ lives here and now. The faith that John articulates has definite parameters and substance because of the Son who came to ground faith, the spiritual who testifies to the Son’s work, and the Father toward whom personal trust is directed through the Son. Without this faith there is no eternal life.*
 - b. **The Greek** emphasizes this point: *“He who has the Son, has the life. He who has not the Son of God, the life he has not.”*
 - c. **The life** is what is lost by losing the Son of God to unbelief, disobedience, unloving ways!

CONCLUSION: It is easy to intellectualize what John says; to put John in Greek philosophical terms.

1. “Believing” then becomes a purely academic, mental, theological exercise – *accepting as true facts about Jesus; virgin birth, perfect life, atoning death, resurrection, forgiveness if you believe all that stuff as true.*
2. But John is not a Greek; he’s a Jew. He thinks *holistically*, and he sees faith as *living with God* – complete identity, loyal obedience, faithful adherence to sacred acts, and profession of love for God before all men.
3. For us to *have the Son of God*, and therefore to *have (eternal) life*, we must *live with and for Jesus Christ!*
 - a. Believe the Spirit’s Word in the four Gospels and the apostolic *kerugma* of the New Testament.
 - b. Surrender to Jesus as complete and total Lord of our life and the owner of all we have and all we are.
 - c. Baptism in His name: *The Spirit’s testimony of water and blood applied to us*
 - d. Identity with Christ in baptism and membership
 - e. Love for God in seeking to obey His commandment, not as a burdensome duty, but as a privilege of love
 - f. Practical and real-life love for those in Christ Covenant Church, Covenant Day School, and all other Christians: *praying for them, serving them, encouraging them, owning them as “your people”,*

gathering with them to worship, work and witness, and seeking always what is their good – at my own expense.

- g. Witnessing to the worth of Jesus in *my giving, a holy life, a word of testimony, and willingness even to die for Him!*

- 4. John wants us to **live out our faith** so that we might know for certain that we have this eternal life!

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13)

- 5. **Do you?** Don't flippantly assume you do because you agree with the Gospel of John, Matthew, Luke or Mark.

- 6. Do you **own** Jesus and **live** for Christ? This is the assurance of eternal life.

Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:12)

- 7. This passage of Scripture is especially dear to me.

- a. I've shared this story with all of you before.
- b. Please indulge me to share it once more.
- c. **September, 1977**, and my father was dying of cancer
- d. I witnessed to him, prayed for him, but wasn't sure if he really "*had the Son of God...and eternal life.*"
- e. Then, on the last day I saw him alive, he opened a New Testament, pointed to these verses, and slipped off to eternity.

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:1-5)

- 8. Such is the power of *the witness, the love, the Son of God.*

- 9. **Do you have the witness within yourself?**