

## Lesson 24: “Faith That Overcomes”

1 John 5:1-4

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Today, as we begin 1 John, chapter 5, we get two wonderful new additions to John’s teaching. One, we get his third belief test of what a Christian must believe to have assurance of eternal life. And Two, we get John’s first and only mention of “faith” in this little epistle, to give proper balance to his teaching on love. “Faith if the victory!” rings loud and true.

**OUR TEXT OF THE DAY**

**1 John 5:1-4** *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.*

We know that John has written this epistle of 1 John to give confidence to believers that they indeed have eternal life (1 John 5:13). He has done this through a number of behavior tests and belief tests. The 3 key behavior tests he has given are:

1. **Obey God’s commandments** (2:3-4, 3:22-24)
2. **Abide in fellowship with God** (1:7, 2:6, 2:27-28)
3. **Love others with the love of God** (2:7-11, 3:11, 4:7)

Note that all three of these behavior tests are bundled together in verse 2 of our passage today, stating that all three of these behaviors must mark the true Christian. Loving the children of God, loving God and obeying God’s commands must go hand in hand to give us confidence in our salvation. And as Jesus said, “my yoke is easy” (Matthew 11:30), for it is the “burden” of love.

To this point John has given us 2 belief tests:

1. **Jesus Christ is fully man**, that is “come in the flesh” (4:2)
2. **Jesus Christ is fully God**, that is “the Son of God” (4:15)

And he has 2 more belief test to give us in chapter 5. The third one is in our passage today, verse 1:

3. **Jesus Christ is Savior of all**, that is “Messiah” or “Christ” (5:1)

Many wrongly think that “Christ” is Jesus’ last name, because we so commonly refer to Him as Jesus Christ. But “Christ” is a title of who he is. He is Jesus *the* Christ. In Jesus’ day he would have been referred to around town as “Jesus Bar-Joseph,” meaning “Jesus, son of Joseph.

The title of “Christ” (Greek: Cristos) comes from the Hebrew of Mashiach, from which we get “Messiah.” Literally, Mashiach means “Anointed One.” Those anointed with oil and by ceremony were typically prophets, priests and kings. So many in the Old Testament with these credentials are “anointed ones,” such as Samuel, or Saul or David. But there are two Old Testament passages that specifically refer to the Mashiach (Messiah) as The Anointed One to come.

**2 SPECIFIC O.T. REFERENCES TO MESSIAH = ANOINTED ONE**

**Psalms 2:2** *The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed.*

**Daniel 9:25** *So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks ...*

Orthodox Jewish rabbis have always considered these passages to be referring to the promised divine Anointed One of God, the Messiah, who would come through the line of David and be the Savior of the Jewish race and ultimately of the world.

In the Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy, J. Barton Payne itemizes 127 Messianic predictions involving more than 3,000 verses, with a remarkable 574 verses referring directly to a personal Messiah. Amazing! – read that again. Following are just a few of the most specific.

**OLD TESTAMENT “CLUES” OF MESSIAH** (from Billy Graham’s Messiah in the Old Testament)

- ✓ He would come from the seed of a woman and would crush the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15)
- ✓ He would come from the seed of Abraham, blessing all the nations on earth (Genesis 12:3)
- ✓ He would be a “prophet like Moses” to whom God said we must listen (Deuteronomy 18:15)

- ✓ He would be born in Bethlehem of Judah (Micah 5:2)
- ✓ He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14)
- ✓ He would have a throne, a kingdom and a dynasty, that will last forever (2 Samuel 7:16).
- ✓ He would be called “Wonderful Counselor,” “Mighty God,” “Everlasting Father,” “Prince of Peace,” and would possess an everlasting kingdom (Isaiah 9:6-7)
- ✓ He would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, coming with gentleness (Zechariah 9:9-10)
- ✓ He would be pierced for our transgression and crushed for our iniquities (Isaiah 53:5)
- ✓ He would die among the wicked ones but be buried with the rich (Isaiah 53:9)
- ✓ He would resurrect from the grave, God not allowing His Holy One to suffer decay (Psalm 16:10)
- ✓ He would come again from the clouds of heaven as the Son of Man (Daniel 7:13-14)
- ✓ He would be “Sun of Righteousness” for all who revere Him and look for His return (Malachi 4:2)
- ✓ He is the One Israel will one day recognize with bitter grief as the One they pierced (Zech. 12:10)

## **JOHN THE BAPTIZER’S TESTIMONY OF JESUS**

**John 1:29** ... He saw Jesus coming to him and said “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ ... I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

Note that John the Baptist’s testimony was that this Messiah would (1) take away the sin of the world (in other words, be Savior of all) and (2) that this Messiah would also be the Son of God = divine.

## **ANDREW’S TESTIMONY TO BROTHER PETER**

**John 1:40-41** *One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah.”*

## **JESUS’ TESTIMONY OF HIMSELF FROM SCRIPTURE**

**Luke 4:16-21** *And he came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because he anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.” ... and He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”*

Here Jesus claims to be the Anointed One of Isaiah’s prophecy, who would display divine credentials.

## **PETER’S CONFESSION OF JESUS (for all the disciples)**

**Matthew 16:13-17** *Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.”*

Note here that Jesus affirms Peter’s confession as true – both that He is the promised Messiah = Anointed One, and that He is the Son of God = divine. And Jesus teaches that this confession was revealed not by study or personal insight, but by revelation from God the Father. And dear Christian, this is true also of your confession – it comes to you from God the Father who has given you that spiritual insight and confirmation by the Spirit within you.

## **JESUS – SAVIOR OF ALL**

So since John the Baptist stated that this Jesus would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29), he was proclaiming that Jesus was the Savior of all mankind. When John states in our passage today,

verse 1, the essential Christian confession that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah = Anointed One) he also is proclaiming that Jesus is the Savior of all. And this truth is corroborated by many other Scriptures.

**1 Timothy 2:3b-5** *God our Savior ... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.*

**Hebrews 2:9** *... by the grace of God He [Jesus] might taste death for everyone.*

**John 12:32** *[Jesus:] And I if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.*

**1 Timothy 4:10** *... we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.*

Does this mean then that all will go to heaven, since Christ is Savior of all? As John will soon tell us in this epistle, Jesus is also the Savior of each who “have” Him or receive Him as their own. That Jesus is the Savior of the world does not mean, then, that all will go to heaven. This is the errant belief of some (ex: “Tentmaker.org”), but not the teaching of our Holy Bible.

So why is it essential that a Christian believe that Jesus is the Savior of all, and what does that mean if it does not mean that all go to heaven? Here are two essential questions, deserving answers.

Answer to the second first: That Jesus is the Savior of all means that Jesus’ death was absolutely sufficient to save all. It is clearly God’s desire that all be saved. But it is also clearly God’s knowledge that all will not be saved. Christ died to offer the free gift of salvation to all. God has thrown the life-line of salvation to all who are drowning in the ocean of their sin. In that sense “all are saved.” But only those who reach out and receive the saving life-line of Jesus’ death as their own will be saved. Theologically it is said that Jesus’ death was *sufficient* for all, but only *efficient* for those who receive it. Future lessons will have more to say on this.

Answer to the first question: Why is it essential for a Christian to believe that Jesus is the Savior of all? Well, if Jesus’ death was indeed sufficient for all, then all can be saved who come to Him. This is where “free will” comes in. We can’t “pick and choose” who will be saved, and therefore with whom we will share the gospel message. Only God knows. We are called to share with all. To use Jesus’ metaphor, we are to scatter the gospel seed over all ground to see if it takes root. This covers all the “whosoever” or “whoever” verses of the Bible, that say reach out to all, such as our beloved John 3:16

**John 3:16** *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

If we didn’t believe that Jesus was the Savior of all, we could never offer this invitation without the caveat “but only if Jesus died for you, and you are one of the chosen ones.” Our invitation, and God’s invitation to “come, all who are thirsty” (Isaiah 55:1) would be insincere if Jesus did not die for all.

This is where FAITH comes in. IT is FAITH that overcomes the world of sin, and sorrow and disappointment. And FAITH believes God even when He says that all will not go to heaven. FAITH shares the good news of God in LOVE. FAITH overcomes when we truly believe that the opportunity for salvation is available to all. Our world is steeped in sin, but Jesus has died to remove all that sin. Only FAITH is needed to overcome. And he who overcomes is the one who has FAITH that Jesus has died to save him/her. “He who has the Son has the life!” (1 John 5:12)