

26. The Epistle of 1 John—5:13-21

(1/15/20)

1 John 5:1-5 (NKJV)

¹ Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. ⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. ⁵ Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

As we said last time, as we come to 1John chapter 5—John is starting to wrap things up by, first of all, repeating what the marks or characteristics of genuine saving faith looks like.

- He starts out by telling us that those with saving faith, first of all, believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

- Then he tells us that those who are really children of God love the Father and the Son—and that true faith loves both the same because They (along with the Spirit) are one and the same God.

- Building on that, John then proceeds to tell us that, true children of God not only love the Father and the Son—they will always love other Christians (not just those in their particular denomination or group) since all Christians are members of the family of God, and the same Spirit binds us all together in one Body—the Church.

- He ends by saying that the final mark of a true Christian is that they prove they know and love God by keeping (or seriously trying to keep) His commandments.

Then John proceeds to talk about *overcomers*—

1 John 5:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has

overcome the world--our faith. ⁵ Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Now, when we studied this a couple of weeks ago, we pointed out that the Bible says—only *overcomers* inherit the Kingdom of God.

But then, right here in 1John 5:4-5—it proceeds to tell us that a person becomes an **overcomer** by *believing* in Jesus Christ, the One Who overcame the devil and conquered death thru His death and resurrection!

We become overcomers by virtue of *His* victory not our own hard work!

Being an overcomer speaks of what we *are in Christ*—not what we *do for Christ* in the way of human effort to defeat areas of bondage and sin in our lives.

We are overcomers because we have exercised saving faith in Jesus, which has allowed the Holy Spirit to place us ‘in Christ’ (we are now members of His Body) and therefore—His victory is our victory!

Last week, we talked about some of the controversy surrounding verses 7 and 8—

1 John 5:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. ⁸ And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

Now, if you’re reading from any other translation other than the **KJV** or the **NKJV**—your Bible reads, (as the **ESV**):

1 John 5:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.

Last time I mentioned how most of the modern translations of this passage leave out what the KJV and NKJV includes—the end of verse 7 and the beginning of verse 8—and why. (Listen online to the message)

1 John 5:9-12 (NKJV)

⁹ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. ¹⁰ He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

If an unbeliever rejects everything the Father has testified about His Son in the pages of Scripture—they are essentially calling God a liar!

On the other hand, if they do believe the testimony of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in Scripture (the *outward* testimony)—at that moment the Holy Spirit moves into their heart and now they have the *inner* testimony of the Spirit. (New heart with new attitudes about life...)

1 John 5:13 (NKJV)

¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to believe* in the name of the Son of God.

Four times in this epistle John says, “*These things I write to you...*” or “*These things I have written to you...*”—

“*That your joy may be full*” (1:4); “*That you may not sin*” (2:1); “*That you be not deceived*” (2:26); “*That you may know you have eternal life*” (5:13)

John wrote his gospel so that people might be saved (20:30-31)—and he wrote his first epistle so that they, who have received Jesus as their Savior, might *know* (have the assurance) they are saved.

I don’t believe the devil can cause a Christian to lose their salvation—but he can cause them to lose the *assurance* of their salvation thru temptation and sin.

1 John 5:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

“Yes, but what about verses like Matthew 21:21-22 where Jesus said—‘Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt...whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.’”

There are many Christians who have been taught and therefore maintain that this Scripture is in fact a promise from the mouth of the Lord Himself that if we have enough faith and believe strongly enough when we pray that—we will receive from God whatever it is we’re asking for (usually material prosperity).

And let me just say that, if this was the only Scripture in the Bible on the subject of asking God for things in prayer—I would be prone to agree with them.

But it isn’t and therefore, we must compare Scripture with Scripture when determining what God is actually saying on any given topic.

And right here in 1John 5:14-15, John is telling us that we’re not ‘calling the shots’ when we pray—we are not the ‘master’ and God our ‘Servant’ when we pray, no matter how hard we believe when asking for things from Him.

John is telling us that, all prayer must pass through the grid of God’s sovereign will (v.14-15).

If what I’m praying for isn’t the will of God, all the faith in the world will not bring it to pass—and would you really want it any other way? (Explain)

Remember also that, the promise Jesus gave in Matthew 21:21-22 wasn’t given to the multitudes in general—but to His disciples in particular.

And what was the criteria He gave for being one of His disciples?

He said that no one could be one of His disciples if they didn't "*take up their cross, deny themselves and follow Me*".

Remember, this is the One who said, "*I have not come to do My will but the will of Him who sent Me*". "*I always do what pleases My Father in heaven.*" "*Not My will but Your will be done.*"

John 16:23-24 (NKJV)

²³ And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. ²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. (define "in My name")

1 John 5:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ **If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does not lead to death*, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin *not leading to death*. There is sin *leading to death*. I do not say that he should pray about that.** ¹⁷ **All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin *not leading to death*.**

This passage is confusing as to what John is referring to when he speaks of '**sin which does not lead to death**', and '**sin leading to death.**'

Does he have physical death or spiritual death in view—or both?

It helps to understand that verses 16 and 17 are connected to what John has just talked about in verses 14 and 15—praying in the will of God—prayers He promises to answer.

Then he proceeds to say—"**If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does not lead to death*, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin *not leading to death*.**" (v.16a)

John is directing this at Christians, who see one of their brothers (or sisters) sinning—to pray for them (the will of God)—but then he adds a condition—as long as the sin they’re involved in isn’t a sin *‘leading to death.’*

“If it isn’t”, John says, “God will give life for those who commit sin not leading to death”.

If John has got a genuine Christian brother in view—then they already have *spiritual* life, so the life he has in mind must be *physical* life.

That being the case, John seems to mean that God will spare their physical life and not take them home if their sin is a sin not leading to death.

Now, there are sins that lead to physical death in the sense that God will bring judgment upon a Christian’s life if they continue in sin—

1 Corinthians 11:29-30 (NLT2)

²⁹ For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God’s judgment upon yourself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died. [sin leading to death]

One author—

“Apparently, a believer can sin to the point where God believes it is just best to bring them home, probably because they have in some way compromised their testimony so significantly that they should just come on home to God. However, it is certainly presumptuous to think this about every case of an untimely death of a believer, or to use it as an enticement to suicide for the guilt-ridden Christian. Our lives are in God’s hands, and if He sees fit to bring one of His children home—that is fine (completely within His sovereign right to do so).”

But even in a case like this—why can’t we pray for a person misusing the Lord’s Supper? And for that matter, why can’t a person guilty of a sin like this repent?

Is misusing the Lord’s Supper, by being selfish, the unpardonable sin?

1 John 5:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does not lead* to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not *leading* to death. **There is sin *leading* to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.** ¹⁷ **All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death.**

It's very difficult to know what John has in mind here when he talks about a "*sin leading to death*" and that it is NOT the will of God that we pray for those committing this kind of sin.

(It's important that we interpret this accurately, since Satan can really go to town condemning young and immature Christians with this passage).

In my devotions this week, I came across something in Isaiah that caught my eye—a passage that John could have had in mind when he talked about the '*sin leading to death*' that we are not to pray for—

Isaiah 22:12-14 (NKJV)

¹² And in that day the Lord GOD of hosts called for weeping and for mourning, For baldness and for girding with sackcloth [repentance]. ¹³ But instead—joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating meat and drinking wine: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" ¹⁴ Then it was revealed in my hearing by the LORD of hosts, "Surely for this iniquity there will be no atonement for you, even to your death," says the Lord GOD of hosts.

So, here we see a sin leading to death for which there is no atonement (forgiveness—"so don't pray for them"—Jer.11:14)—but what exactly is it?

From the context, it seems to be referring to the rebellious, arrogant refusal of someone living in sin (in this case a city—Jerusalem!) to humble themselves, confess their sin to God and repent.

Instead, they 'double-down' and become even more obstinate and rebellious as they mock God by saying—"If God is going to judge us—fine, let's party today for tomorrow we die!!"

Why is this an unpardonable sin?

Because, there can be no forgiveness without confession and repentance—and their heart’s had become so hard because of constant, unremitting sin, they were past the point of repentance—it was no longer even in their vocabulary!

And so, with that in mind, we return to verse 16—

1 John 5:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does not lead to death*, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin *not leading to death*. There is sin *leading to death*. I do not say that he should pray about that.

I think the best way to interpret this verse is to see John’s comments directed at two different people—“*a brother who sins..*” and then a person who commits a “*sin leading to death.*”

The first person is a Christian—whereas the second person is a “*professing*” Christian ‘brother’, and not someone who is a true believer in Christ.

Let me paraphrase what I believe John is saying—“*If anyone sees someone who professes to be a brother in Christ, who has committed a sin leading to death—don’t pray for them*” (refer to Titus 1:16)

In that case, I believe the sin leading to death that John has in mind that we shouldn’t pray for—is the sin of *apostasy*—a sin only an *unbeliever* can commit. (Explain)

J. Vernon McGee—

“An apostate is one who has heard the great truths of the Christian Faith, has become intellectually convinced that Jesus is the Christ, has even made a profession of Christianity, although he has never been truly saved. After having tasted the good things of Christianity, he completely renounces them and repudiates the Lord Jesus Christ. In Hebrews 6:6 we learn that this is ‘**sin leading to death**’. Those committing this sin have no way of escape—

Hebrews 6:4-6 (NKJV)

⁴ For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ if they fall away [apostasy not backsliding], to renew them again to

repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

In this entire Epistle, John has been speaking with the Gnostics in view. These false teachers had once been in the Christian fellowship. They had professed to be believers. They had known the facts of the faith, but then they had turned their backs on the Lord Jesus and accepted a teaching which completely denied His deity and the sufficiency of His atoning work. A Christian cannot have liberty in praying for the restoration of such because God has already indicated in His word that they have sinned unto death.”

Therefore, the sin **leading to death** that John is speaking of is apostasy.

But let’s, for a minute, talk about another sin that leads to eternal death—blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—a sin only an unbeliever can commit.

What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—which Jesus, in Matthew 12:31-32, said was the only unforgiveable sin?

To fully understand what blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is—we need to understand what the ministry of the Holy Spirit is.

John 15:26 (NKJV)

²⁶ "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.

John 16:14-15 (NKJV)

¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore, I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to testify of Jesus—to bear witness to the people of this world that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

As the Holy Spirit begins to bear witness to a person’s heart of this truth, using the changed lives of others—how they were set free from their own personal ‘demons’ and transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ.

Or the Holy Spirit might use a miracle of some kind or a healing to get a hold of their heart and show them that Jesus is real—a living Savior Who died and rose from the dead and wants to save them.

However, as they resist the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their life—they begin down the path that will eventually (if they continue down that path and don't repent) lead to the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

It's important to note that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit isn't any one sin but a process—a process leading to a conclusion, a destination—eternal separation from God.

A process where each time a person says “no” to Jesus, as the Holy Spirit is bearing witness of Him to their heart—that He is the Son of God and Savior of the world Who wants to save them from hell.

As the Holy Spirit of God testifies to them Who Jesus is and what He has done for them—they reject that testimony, essentially calling the Holy Spirit a false witness, and a liar!

Calling God the Spirit a liar is to blaspheme God—and yet, He mercifully doesn't judge them on the spot but give them more opportunities to repent!

But if they continue to reject the Holy Spirit's testimony of Christ—their heart becomes harder and harder until their heart becomes so hard that they pass the “*spiritual point of no return*”—at that point, they not only will not believe—now they cannot believe.

This is what eventually happened to the scribes and Pharisees—

John 12:37, 39 (NKJV)

³⁷ But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him...

³⁹ Therefore they could not believe...

The Scribes and Pharisees had repeatedly denied the ministry of the Holy Spirit in their lives and with each denial of who Jesus was and the corresponding rejection of Him as their Savior—their hearts grew harder and harder until they became so hard—it was no longer a matter of they “*wouldn’t believe*” now they “*couldn’t believe*”.

God can do nothing for those who reject Jesus as Lord and Savior in the face of all the overwhelming evidence and the constant witness of the Holy Spirit working in their hearts.

Commentator William Hendriksen says of such people:

“Their sin is unpardonable because they are unwilling to tread the path that leads to pardon. For a thief, an adulterer, and a murderer there is hope. The message of the gospel may cause him to cry out, “*O God be merciful to me, the sinner.*” But when a man has become hardened, so that he has made up his mind not to pay attention to the ... Spirit ... he has placed himself on the road that leads to perdition.”

It’s not that God doesn’t want to forgive them, and it isn’t that Jesus didn’t die to pardon them of their sins.

It’s that they refuse God’s forgiveness and they reject the Son’s pardon until their heart becomes like spiritual ‘concrete’—for all eternity!

➔ Talk about the time, as a young believer, the devil told me I had committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit...

1 John 5:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ **We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one *does not touch him*.**

1 John 5:18 (AMP)

¹⁸ We know [absolutely] that anyone born of God does not [deliberately and knowingly] practice committing sin, but the One Who was begotten of God [Jesus Christ] carefully watches over *and* protects him [the believer]—[Christ’s divine presence within him preserves him against the evil], and the wicked one does not lay hold (get a grip) on him *or* touch [him].

“Does not touch him”: The word *touch* here has the idea of ‘*to attach one’s self to*’ (the same Greek word is used in John 20:17 of how Mary Magdalene clung to Jesus after His resurrection).

One commentator had this to say—

“John clearly says that the wicked one—Satan, or, by implication one of His demons—cannot attach himself to the one who is born of Him (Jesus).

What Greek scholars say about this word touch: “It means to lay hold of or to grasp rather than a mere superficial touch” (Robertson). Because we are born of Him, Satan cannot attach himself to us, or cling to us, in the sense he can in the life of someone who is not born of Him.”

Satan can tempt, manipulate and influence the Christian—but he doesn’t ‘own’ us anymore now that we belong to Jesus—so he can’t ‘grab’ us, hold us captive and control us as he can the unbeliever!

1 John 5:19-20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway* [control, power] of the wicked one. ²⁰ And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

The Bible says that Satan: “*is the god of this age*” (2 Cor. 4:3–4, lit.) and the “*prince of this world*” (John 14:30)—and therefore, as John says, the whole world (fallen world system) is under his power and control.

Ephesians 2:2, 4-5 (NKJV)

² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience...

⁴ **But God**, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Romans 6:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

1 John 5:21 (NKJV)

²¹ **Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.**

One pastor had this to say about John’s closing exhortation:

“This may seem like a strange way to end John’s letter, but it fits in with the theme of a real, living relationship with God. The enemy to fellowship with God is idolatry: embracing a false

god, or a false idea of the true God. John rightly closes with this warning, after having spent much of the book warning us against the dangers of the false Jesus many were teaching in his day (1 John 3:18–23; 4:1–3; 5:6–9).

We can only have a real relationship with the God who is really there! Idolatry, whether obvious (praying to a statue) or subtle (living for your career or someone other than God) will always choke out a real relationship with God and damage our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Jesus. No wonder John ends with **“keep yourselves from idols”**—this is how we protect our relationship with God.

In a great sermon in this last verse of John’s letter, Charles Spurgeon first noted that John addressed **“little children”**.

- *This is a title of deep affection.*
- *This is a title that indicates regeneration and family relation.*
- *This is a title that indicates humility.*
- *This is a title that indicates teachableness.*
- *This is a title that implies faith.*
- *This is a title that implies weakness.*

Then, Spurgeon noted that John gave a command: To **“keep yourselves from idols.”**

- *This speaks against obvious, visible idols.*
- *This speaks against worshipping yourself. We can do this by overindulgence in food or drink, by laziness, or by too much concern about how we look or what we wear.*
- *This speaks against worshipping wealth.*
- *This speaks against worshipping some hobby or pursuit.*
- *This speaks against worshipping dear friends or relatives.”*