

1 JOHN

Section 3 – 11 weeks

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This was originally an expository series of sermons given in the church where I was serving as Pastor. A few years later, they were edited to be used as a Bible Study. There are a few things I feel I should share with you before using this material:

First: I had no intent of sharing or publishing this material until encouraged to do so by some friends. While I did consult several commentaries as I was preparing the original sermon series, I did not make notes of the references used in the messages. There was not in the beginning, nor is there now, any intent to plagiarize. Should you see anything you feel is the original thought of another, I ask for your grace and mercy.

Second: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I tend to spell certain words phonetically for the purpose of emphasis. When transforming these notes from sermon notes to teaching notes, I felt inclined to leave a number of these phonetic spellings. They help me to make emphasis in the lesson at particular points.

Third: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I make little effort to conform to rules of grammar. One example is that I often use a hyphen (-) to indicate a point where I may want to pause slightly and to keep certain thoughts connected as I speak. Another example is that I will use local colloquialisms to make points in the message.

Please accept that these notes are not an academic work. But I do hope they will help the preacher or teacher to be able to more quickly prepare their own sermon or teaching.

I won't tell you the person's name - But I would like to share with you the essence of a letter. While attending Seminary, this man had professed his faith in Jesus – and expressed his belief in the Word of God. Everything about his confession and beliefs seemed right on. When he finished seminary, he went forth with what appeared to be a solid faith.

After several years in the ministry, he sent a letter . This letter says he is not only resigning from the church he has pastured - He is resigning from the Christian faith. No longer believing that it is real - He has seen too much fake - And is unable to see any hope. He has decided to try to establish a career in the secular world.

If this can happen to a minister - one who has had the opportunity to study the Word of God - under those who teach it faithfully AS God's Word - Then it can happen to any Believer. And because it has happened - and is today happening – the message in this lesson is relevant and important.

I believe if this dear wounded soul - had known and practiced the points in this lesson - He would not have arrived at this place of complete defeat in his life.

Read 1 John 4:4 and make notes:

God lives in us by his Spirit. And God is greater than the devil. The Holy Spirit put 'You' first in the sentence. This is to impress the reader with the contrast. "You", not the false teachers - "You", not those of the world, - are the ones who have overcome. You are from God.

Those who believe in the Lord overcame the false prophets. They refused to believe what the false prophets taught. They refused to do what was not good. They did not join the group that left the church. Instead, they continued to believe what was true. They were able to defeat the lies of the false teachers.

The reason for this was that God was working BY his people. God was working IN his people. And he is greater than the person who is in the world. The person who is in the world is the devil.

The world = is all that opposes God. God lives in us by his Holy Spirit. God has given the Spirit to be in us. The devil lives in those of the world. So the spirit of the false Christ comes from the devil.

You have overcome these seducers, because greater is the Spirit of Christ that is in you than the spirit of anti-christ that is in the world.

God's power to save is always greater than the Devils power to destroy. Simply by believing that The Christ has come in the flesh – every Believer has already overcome the spirit of the anti-Christ in a very significant way.

False prophets and false teachers frequently are the source of great deal of sadness for Holy Spirit inspired teachers. The world receives the false teachers – the world tends to heap up recognition and honor to the false teacher.

The Holy Spirit inspired teacher experiences a great deal of rejection by the masses of this world. Even though, they are inspired by the Holy Spirit, it is quite common for the teacher to look at their ministerial struggle and then to look at the acceptance of the false teacher - and then fall into sadness and sometimes even depression.

You can analyze it and say “they are just reacting in the flesh” – and you would probably be correct – but it still happens – and hurts deeply. Despite the large number of false prophets and false teachers. Despite the large number of people who reject Christianity – God is greater in Power and greater in Knowledge than all of them combined.

Because our identity comes from God – who lives within us – we can experience God’s greatness – even in the midst of a great number of adversaries who say they are against us. People giving false teaching and false prophecies will generally get a large following because they speak the language of the world. And the world has a large population. The character of the world and the character of the one teaching false teachings are from the same common root.

Read 1 John 4:5 and make notes:

Earlier in this letter, we were told that False Teachers and False Prophets had already gone out into the world. Just so that there is no mistake or confusion about this – in this verse we are told again and in very clear terms – these false teachers belong to the world. We have already been told that they are inspired by evil spirits and not the Holy Spirit, and we were told how we can tell who they are.

Christians belong to God, not to the world. Those of the world speak false things about the Lord. The devil works in them to oppose the truth about Christ. They are from the world. Therefore, they speak from the world. Their ideas come from the world and from the devil. For this reason those of the world will listen to them.

They - Those false prophets. Are of the world - they do not know God. Therefore they speak – From the same principle, wisdom, spirit; and, of consequence, the world hears them. I don’t know how many of you have noticed this- but I have observed something – If you tell people what they want to hear – they will listen to you.

Many people in sales have learned to make use of this - and it is so very sad – but a number of people who have accepted positions and places of ministry have learned to make use of this. Those who teach what the world wants to hear – will always have a following! Those who teach only what the Word of God says – may or may not have a following!

I have noticed that when some Bible Scholar presents a truth found in the God’s Word - and encourages people to follow it and to live by it. It seems that so few are interested in listening – let alone putting it into practice. But, let someone who claims to be a Bible Scholar - come out with some outlandish idea that contradicts the rest of God’s Word - and that new teaching will show up in papers all across the nation. Maybe even be interviewed on several TV and Radio programs. It will often become the “new fad” that just has to be put into practice everywhere.

Why is this so? Because they are saying the things that the world wants to hear. You can sell more books with titles such as “excel with the goodness that’s in you” - than you can books with titles such as “why we need to repent.”

Read 1 John 4:6 and make notes:

Just previous to these verses, we were told a different spirit that “inspires” the false teacher as opposed to the Holy Spirit who inspires Christians. Here we are told something else that is very interesting. The people who really know God – they will listen to us who are inspired by the Holy Spirit. The people who don’t really know God – they won’t listen to us.

When we are sure that we are being led and inspired by the Holy Spirit – and we come across someone who simply will not listen to us – someone who will not receive what we have to say – this tells us that they don’t know the same God that we know.

In the previous passage, we were told how we can recognize a false teacher from a Holy Spirit inspired teacher. Now in this passage we are told how we can recognize a false Christian from a real Christian.

In the previous passage and now in this passage we have been given 2 tests that help to quickly reveal what is True Christianity and what is False Christianity. Fairly often, people will get to going down the “don’t judge” trail and out of an effort to be obedient to the “don’t judge” philosophy – they quickly run through this passage or skip it all together.

This passage along with the previous one - makes it fairly clear that we are supposed to be doing some judging. We need to judge whether a teacher – or minister – is being “inspired” by the Holy Spirit or by some “other” spirit. This is a very important judging that we must do. AND we need to be judging who is a “real Christian” – this is fairly important judging that we need to do.

In contrast to the false teachers, we belong to God - ‘We’ includes all those people who speak the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ. Those people who will listen to the truth. Those who do not belong to God will not believe the truth. We can know the origin of what people say. We know whether it is from God or from evil spirits. All we need to do is to notice who listens to the message.

The Spirit of God is in his people. He will cause them to know what is true. The true Spirit is God’s Holy Spirit. He lives in God’s people. Those who have this kind of spirit speak the truth.

There is a false spirit that comes from the devil. There are also the spirits of people who do not have God’s Spirit. What these say cannot be the true message of God. They teach what is false and they lead people away from the truth.

There are several things we should take home with us from this passage:

Many people are quite taken with the things false teachers say. The Holy Spirit, speaking through John, shows that He doesn't have great concerns regarding the real Christians. He expresses the faith that the Power of God, who resides in Every Believer, is so much greater than the power of the anti-Christ that resides in the false teachers. When the Believer will listen to and follow the leading of the Spirit that is in them, they are able to resist the temptations and withstand the errors thrown about by these false teachers.

#1 We Need To Judge

There is something implicit in this text – there is an admonition to draw a line of distinction between those drawn to truth and those who are drawn to error. The Holy Spirit, speaking through John in this letter, lets us know that there is no neutral ground - there is no gray area.

This letter exhorts all Christians to discern and to distinguish between Truth and error to reject worldliness and to embrace a lifestyle fashioned like that of Jesus. Christianity is not based upon subjective impression or mere personal opinion. Christianity is grounded in the objective and definitive reality that Jesus was and is God.

#2 We Can Overcome

Perhaps you noticed that these 3 verses all began with an emphatic pronoun.

In verse 4, it is “You”

In verse 5, it is “They”

In verse 6, it is “We”

I'm sure some are quick to say, “so what” – “that's no big deal” - But it is a subtle and important “big deal.”

“You” – those who are reading the letter – Those who are Christians – you who are Believers.

“They” – not only those who are false teachers – but those who just won’t listen to or accept the gospel message.

“We” – some people teach this as referring to John and the other apostles. They like to teach this as John including himself with the apostles – and the apostles as being somewhat higher on the Christian scale.

I acknowledge that many teach it this way – but I don’t believe that is what the Holy Spirit - or even John - intended to communicate by this statement. Those first century Christians were just like Christians today in the 21st century. Christians frequently hold their Christian Teachers on a higher plane or status than they hold themselves.

The “We” in this text was “John” and the Believers who were reading the letter. “You little children” and “Me, the apostle John.” “We” belong to God.

When you find someone who is genuinely being led and directed by the Holy Spirit – they don’t want the people they are teaching to see themselves as being “less” than the teacher. And they don’t want the people they are teaching to see the teacher as being “more.” Every Holy Spirit led and Holy Spirit empowered teacher – sees themselves as nothing more than a tool or vessel in the hands of God. They would love to see everyone they teach to accept the power of God and then begin to move and act and go about doing exactly as they are doing.

Those first century Believers as they read this letter – and they knew they were mere children in the Kingdom of God. When they got to this part where it says “we” – it communicated to them that “we little children” are as much with God - as is “John our apostle” – Wow!

One of the important things in this text is the basis of their victory. How was it that these “little children” overcame the evil one? If we can discover how they overcame – If we can discover how they escaped the extreme pressure of the false teachings- then you and I today will have a set of instructions as to how we can do so.

The false teachers of the first century had all the subtle and sneaky errors that we find in false teachers today. What they say often sounds so beautiful – and it is always attractive when it is presented. These first century “little children” didn’t overcome the evil ones by their superior intelligence – because they were mere children.

There is nothing mentioned in this text about the Believers being smarter than the false teachers. There is nothing mentioned about having superior will power or how they withstood the intense brainwashing by the cults. There is no mention about the Believers having a more in depth knowledge concerning Theology.

“You, little children” overcame the false prophets, because of power of He who is in you.”

In short, these little children didn’t overcome due to anything that had been given to them in the way of strength, or intelligence, or any other thing they could take hold of and control. They overcame by the power of someone else who acted on their behalf – and that made the victory rather humbling- and nothing any of them could boast about.

Now that we see this – now that we know how the first century Believers overcame the false teachers - We now know how we can overcome the evil one – and how we can overcome the false teachers of our day. If we will allow God to take up residence within us – then His greatness and His power will defeat the evil one and the false teachers of the evil one on our behalf.

It has been said that “false belief” is just as much a sin as is unrighteous behavior, or a lack of love. When a Believer experiences victory over “false belief” - it isn’t due to the superior strength or to the superior resistance of the Believer. It is due to the power and strength of the one who lives in and through the Believer.

#3 Keep A Child-Like Faith

Today is certainly one of the generations of man's history when it certainly does appear that evil is winning over good. When we say "Greater is God that is within us than the one who is in the world"- we just might hear someone say – "take a good look around and you will see that such a statement is ludicrous." For someone to see it that way means they are only seeing through the eyes of the world. The real truth is that God is so much more great and so much more powerful than all the power of all the false teachers that there is no comparison.

The power of the evil one is incomparable to God's power. Rather than being distressed by the analogy of these Believers being "children" – it is part of the encouragement and assurance.

These first century Believers were "of God" and they were "little children." Do you remember what Jesus said – "we must come to him as little children." The manner and level of trust that comes from children is the manner of trust we must have.

I'm sure those first century Believers didn't fully understand it all – and neither do we. We just need to bring our child-like trust to the Word of God and to His taking up residence within us – and to His overcoming the enemy on our behalf.

The person who – in child-like faith – trusts God's Word to guide and lead them through life - And reacts to the situations and circumstances of life according to the instructions laid out in God's Word - Will find that they are kept safe through all manner of ensnaring errors and entrapping falsehoods. They will discover that even though in the natural they are no match for the threat that has come up against them. They will be delivered and made victorious over the threats of the enemy.

#4 Purpose Of Judging

The test we are to use is not for the purpose of determining “whom to befriend” and whom to reject. As Christians, we often are quick to cut off completely the person who rejects our first attempt to share the gospel or to share our testimony. We are fairly quick to just hand them over to hell and move on to another. And we are not to judge in the sense that we are to set the punishment someone is to receive. That is left to another kind of judge.

This test is to help us understand better why so many do reject our testimony - and why so few accept it. This test is to help us recognize those who do in fact need us to share Jesus with them - because we now have a way of recognizing who the people of the world are - even though some of them claim to be a “Christian.”

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

This letter has been describing how to tell the difference between those inspired by the Holy Spirit from those inspired by other spirits. And describing how to tell the difference between those who are real Christians from those who are false Christians.

Now the letter turns to a discussion on Love. There is much said about love in our contemporary society. A great deal of advertising in our nation is built around the kind of love that the Greeks call “*eros*” love.

So many of us are quick to declare our “love” of one thing or another. We “love” our cars – we “love” our house - We “love” our clothes – we “love” our pets - We “love” dessert – we “love” a good steak - We “love” going to a particular place - We “love” this person or that group. For a society – or nation of people – who think about “love” so much and talk about “love” so much – This text is very very important.

Read 1 John 4:7 and make notes:

In the previous texts, this letter describes the Believers who are reading this letter as being “we” with the apostle John – together they are all part of the kingdom of God. In this portion of the letter these Believers who are part of the kingdom of God are called “Dear Friends”.

Christians should love each other. We should obey the command and love each other. We should love other Christians because love comes from God.

God is the origin of this love. God makes us able to love each other although by nature we may not do so. Love is part of the character of a Christian.

The Christian is a child of God. The child of God receives this love from the Father. All those who have this love are born of God. Those people who are born of God will love each other.

Love proves whether we are born of God. Those who love = know God. It is by the Spirit that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. Every one that truly loves God and his neighbor is born of God.

There are several New Testament Scriptures - that tell us we are expected to treat one another in a loving manner. It is reasonable to encourage Christians to love one another. To encourage a Christian to love others is basically encouraging the Christian to act and to live out their life in accordance with the family of which they are a part. Or encouraging the Christian to act and live according to their status. Act according to who you are!

There are many kinds or types of love spoken about in our society. And we can easily get into a false teaching if we take this to say that anybody who has “love” = is a child of God. There are many who show “love” of some kind to another person and deny that Jesus is the Christ.

Verse 7 speaks of “*agape*” love. There were other words for “love” in the 1st century. The message would be very different if the texts had used the word “*phileo*”- or the word “*eros*”, - or any other word for love. But the Holy Spirit used the word “*agape*” in this text.

“*Agape*” love comes from God. The only place to obtain “*Agape*” love – is from God. So, “everyone who expresses “*agapao*” love. Everyone who goes about their daily life in an “*agapao*” manner toward others has “been born of God” - Because they couldn’t get that kind of love from anywhere else. Since this “divine” kind of love belongs to the kingdom of God - the only way we can have the “divine” love is to be part of the divine kingdom.

When I was in the Army some years ago, everyone in the unit to which I belonged had requirements as to how we would conduct ourselves on duty. Our uniform bore an insignia that identified us as being part of that unit. Even when we were off duty, our commanding officer required that we conduct ourselves in a certain manner. Our honorable conduct at all times was to reflect the honor and integrity of the unit to which we belonged.

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Should any one of us be caught acting in a manner other than that required, even off duty, meant being dismissed from the unit. We would not be dismissed from being in the army, but we could no longer be in that unit.

There was an expected conduct, and anything less - had negative consequences. While I admit that experience brings some analogy for me to being a Christian - there are a few differences.

Christians are never “off duty” from Christian living. Christians are never “on vacation” from being a Christian. So the expected actions and attitudes - always involve “being on duty.”

This love is not just an attitude of love. It is a love that acts. When someone finds out that we are a Christian – their response should always be “I could tell by the way you conduct your life.” In this case - “I could tell by the love you extend to others.”

Read 1 John 4:8 and make notes:

Love is the test of whether a person knows God. If we know God, we will love other Christians. If we do not love the Christians then we do not know God. The reason for this is that God is love. Love is not a description of God.

He is so much more than love. Love is part of his nature and character. All that God does, he does in love.

Verse 8 also speaks of “*agape*” love. So while we may find some people who love in one or several of the kinds of love we may know on this earth - if they do not express “*agapao*” toward others - then they do NOT know God. Because “God is *agape*”.

A person simply could not come into contact with the divine loving God - and not be transformed – or changed – by that contact with the divine love of God.

Read 1 John 4:9 and make notes:

God showed his love for us and for all people. He sent his only Son, whom he loves, into the world. Jesus is God the Son. He became a man and he lived on earth. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived among us. God sent him for this purpose, that by Christ we might live. He died for us and for our sins. God raised him up from death. He showed us the love of God. And God now gives eternal life with Jesus.

Most of us have at some time in the past heard someone say to us, “I love you.” And then this very same person went on to hurt us – maybe they took advantage of us in some way - maybe they took from us in some way - maybe they simply did not help us when we needed help. God is so very different from mankind! God didn’t just say that He loves us. Here is how God demonstrated His love for us - “He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live.”

Read 1 John 4:10 and make notes:

Now, “This is love.” As we look at the many different “loves” we know about on earth - the concept of what love really is can become cloudy – or at least confusing. God knew it would be that way for mankind - so God provided a clear example – and a clear definition of real love - of divine love – and this is it. Love is this: that God loved us.

We know true love by what God has done for us. This is what God did because of his love for us. He sent his Son to die for our sins. When Jesus died, he removed our sins from us. But Jesus rose up from death to life again. So by the Lord Jesus, we can have life and we are able to love God. God loves us although we did nothing to deserve his love.

He loved us before we loved him. This is opposite to what the false teachers may have taught. This love is not the same as any other kind of love. Our love is merely a reaction to his love. Love is explained, defined, and demonstrated by our loving God by what He has done for us

It is very true that we owe Him so much. “Love” = is that God loved us even while we were sinners. Before we acknowledged Him - Before we were willing to allow God to be a part of our lives - God loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for “our sins.” That’s Love!

Read 1 John 4:11 and make notes:

Christians should love each other because God loves us. He showed his love when he sent his Son to die for us. We should love in the same manner as God does. We should be ready in love to give ourselves for each other.

Those of us who have been the recipients of God’s love - Those of us who have had our sins forgiven by the Gracious act of God - Those of us who have been touched by the *Agape* Love of God - We cannot do anything else but “*agapao*” in our daily lives. Having been the recipients of God’s Grace – we ought to love. And it is reasonable for God to expect us to “*agape*” one another.

If you want something that truly puzzles the mind - then try to figure out HOW someone could experience divine love - And not be changed by that experience.

Read 1 John 4:12 and make notes:

The false teachers said that they had seen God. They said that they had special knowledge about God. This can't be true, because no person has ever seen God. What they said was false.

John tells us to love those people that we can see. We don't see God with our eyes. But we do know him - when we love each other. And, as we love each other, we love God.

Our love is the evidence that God lives in us. God does not live in us because we love each other. Rather we love each other because God lives in us. He has created love in us that is like his love. The love that God has produced in us is good and complete. We all share the same love with God and with each other.

When we love like this, God's love has achieved its purpose in us. We cannot leave "love" in some abstract application. Love is personal – especially "*agape*" love. People who say they "love" God - and never do anything for God – have to be doubted. People who say they "love" their church - and never get involved – have to be doubted. Just showing up for services is not getting involved - Just going around with a Christian sticker on our car is not serving God.

Here in this verse 9 of 1 John it sounds very much like John 3:16 doesn't it? God didn't have a "hidden love" for mankind. God expressed "His Love" openly and clearly. That's one of the big differences between *Agape* love and any of the other Worldly loves.

"*Agape*" love cannot be kept hidden. It is the nature of divine love to be demonstrated. And if our love can be kept hidden – then it isn't the divine love – it isn't the God kind of love – it isn't *agape* love.

Those who know me personally for any length of time at all – know that I am in favor of every Believer receiving and using the gifts of the Holy Spirit that He chooses to give to them. But based on today's texts, I must state this slowly and clearly: regardless of what gift of the Holy Spirit we claim to have - regardless of what exciting or impressive ministry we claim to demonstrate - if we do not have the “*agape*” kind of love being lived out in our daily lives - then we have not come into contact with the One True Living God.

For those who have met God – those who have been touched by God - they cannot help it – they have the “*agape*” kind of love living and active within them.

From a worldly logic perspective it would be a reasonable argument to make - that if we have been the recipient of God's divine love - then we should love God in return. It would be completely logical to conclude that we “ought” to Love God. But the statement made is that we “ought” to love one another.

Let's consider this divine “*agape* love” of God. It was directed toward people. So if we have the divine “*agape*” love that God has - then we would be directing it toward people. If we have the divine “*agape*” love - it will be directed toward sinners.

The real divine *agape* love - does not desire to see anyone to perish - but for all to have eternal life.

“No one has ever seen God.” This is a well known Old Testament thought. In the 1st chap of John's gospel – we find a contrast between the invisibility of God and the revelation of Him through His incarnate Son, Jesus. In this letter we are told that if we express “*agapao*” toward one another - “then God lives in us and His “*agape*” is made complete in us.” This is where we find a great deal of conviction for many Christians today. When lost people look at the bitterness, the vengefulness, and the willful intent to hurt others - that is expressed by those claiming to be Christians- they are not only prevented from seeing God – they are being given a false impression of who and what God is. And they usually don't want any part of that kind of Christianity.

This is also a great challenge to all of us who are Christians. When we live out our daily lives in an “*agapao*” manner toward others - then the God of love is made visible to the lost people of this world. And then they see a divine God that many of them will desire to get to know. God cannot be seen any more than the wind can be seen - but the effect of the wind can be seen. And so can the effect of God.

What if a person only experienced the effects of hurricanes and tornadoes. What if this person never experienced a gentle breeze. Can you imagine what their impression of the wind would be? If a person’s only experience with the wind was things being torn apart - do you think we could interest them in going with us to a place where the wind is said to be active? Go ahead and tell this person that the Holy Spirit of God is like the wind and He wants to be a part of their daily life.

Here’s the question each of needs to ask ourselves:

Do we show people the gentle breeze of the “*agape*” love God - The God of Grace and Mercy?

Do we show people the refreshing breeze of forgiving sins and restoring peace God?

What image of God are we showing to the lost people of our community by our daily lives?

Are we – by way of our daily lives causing people to stay away from God - or do we cause people to desire to get to know our God ?

1 John - 26 – Real Christians Love

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

The readers of this letter had previously been told that their love for one another is a sign that God lives in them. In today's section of this letter we are given more indications that reveal that God lives in a person.

Read 1 John 4:13 and make notes:

We know that we live in him. We know that God lives in us. How do “we know” that we live in Him and He is us? The way a Believer can know this – is because God has given his Spirit to us.

How do we know that we have received His Spirit? We are going to find two things in today's text that are indications that we have received God's Spirit.

Read 1 John 4:14 and make notes:

Some want to say that the “we” in this verse is talking about John and other apostles. Others want to say that the “we” is speaking of John and the readers. I go with another view - the “we” refers to those of us who make up the church as a whole and not any specific person.

All Christians believe that Jesus is the Son of God. All Christians believe that the Father sent Jesus. All Christians can know this truth. All Christians know that God sent Jesus to rescue us. We don't see this with our eyes. But we can know it by faith.

Read 1 John 4:15 and make notes:

It is helpful at this point to remember that this letter was written to combat the teachings of false teachers in that day. Most likely the “anyone” mentioned in this verse is referring to the false teachers. Whether the person can confess that Jesus is the son of God becomes our primary evidence of whether they are in fellowship with God.

Let’s not allow this to become too deep of a theological point. Let’s keep this on the most simple level in order for a person to have the possibility of fellowship with God hinges on this historical fact of whether Jesus was the son of God and that He came in the flesh.

Here is the #1 Indication that we have God’s Spirit:

Anyone who does not confess or believe in the literal incarnation of God in the person Jesus Christ cannot have fellowship with the heavenly father. There is more than one religion today that will encourage their followers to say that “yes there was a Jesus” - but that Jesus wasn't a literal son of God. So it's not enough just to have some belief in Jesus - it’s not even enough to obey some of His teachings - we must also acknowledge the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ.

Real Christians believe that Jesus is God’s son. They believe the truth that God sent Jesus. God lives in those who believe. If we believe in the Lord Jesus, we will receive a new life. This life is in God.

Read 1 John 4:16 and make notes:

1 John - 27 – How We Know (2)

We can depend on God's love. Christians can be sure that the love of God is real. We can depend on it. We know that God loves us. His love can never fail. God loves all people - but not just in general. God loves each person and each one is precious to him. God's nature is to love and to act in love. His love comes from his own character. The cause of his love is not the person whom he loves. He loves because He IS love.

Here is the #2 Indication that we Have God's Spirit:

A person who has this love - lives in God. And God lives in him. If we live in Love Toward Others – That's a good indication! The love that God gives, will by it's nature, reach out to other people. Maybe everybody cannot do this honestly and truthfully but the real believer can make this statement because of the personal experience they've had real believers have experienced personally the love of God. This takes it from just some symbolism or demonstration of God's love by what Jesus did on the cross – and what Jesus did on the cross is monumental. This is talking about the real personal experience of the love of Christ. Since God is love and God is living in the believer - it seems only natural to recognize that this person would experience personally God's love. If we have the God inside us, who is love, - then how could we fail to experience the love of God.

We are going to see in this next few verses - that there are 2 significant Benefits to having God's Spirit.

Read 1 John 4:17 and make notes:

“In this way” - We love God and we Christians love each other. We live in God AND God lives in us. Love is complete in us when we love God. As we love God and each other, love achieves its purpose. Love will develop in us. And we will be more mature (or made complete) in love.

This is what God intended it to do for us. And this gives us confidence for that future day when God is the judge. This is the confidence that we have in him.

The day is coming when God will be the judge of all people. That day will be the end of the world, as we know it. We can be confident that God will decide for us. This is not because of what we have done. It is because we have the life of Christ. He has taken away all our sins because he loves us.

The First Benefit to Having God's Spirit – Confidence!

We have confidence because we are like Christ. As Christ lives in God, so by him we also live in God. Jesus Christ is the Son of God - By him, we are children of God. As God loves the Son, so he also loves us.

Jesus lived here on earth in the Father's love - And we live in the Father's love too. Verse 17 provides us with some interesting thoughts. One is that most any Christian would honestly admit that our "approaching God in confidence" in prayer comes and goes.

We sometimes approach him with great confidence in our prayer and at other times we timidly approach him and beg for the things we desire. Some days we walk with such confidence that we are doing the right thing and pleasing our father and on other days we find ourselves hoping he is not displeased with our attitudes and actions. And then here in verse 17 it says love is made complete in that we will have confidence on the day of judgment.

This is especially interesting for those people who are looking ahead to the day of judgment and hoping that when they get there that they will have done enough good things to please the father and hoping they have NOT done too many bad things to displease him. This verse doesn't say "where" along the journey we will get that confidence - but it does say that we will have this confidence by the time we face the day of judgment. Wow – Alleluia!

Another thing that's interesting in verse 17 is that tells us “in this world we are like him.” When Jesus was in the world, he didn't fall prey to the temptations of this world and many of us do so we're not like them in that respect. You can go off in several directions with this particular kind of analogy but perhaps the one that's best - is the one that keeps us on track for where the Holy Spirit will take us to understand that we are in this world but we don't belong to this world.

When Jesus was in this world His true citizenship was in the heavenly kingdom. Christians are in this world and our true citizenship is in the heavenly kingdom. So like him we are in this world, but we did not belong to this world.

If you have ever had the opportunity to be in a foreign country or maybe even just a different part of this country - in a place which you are not originally from - you may have noticed that you were not accepted by the locals like another local is accepted. Since our citizenship is not in this world we often times find we are not accepted by those who citizenship is of this world. Jesus certainly knows what that feels like

Read 1 John 4:18 and make notes:

The Second Benefit to having God's Spirit – No Fear! We are not afraid, because of God's love. There can be no fear in perfect love. Please don't allow someone to get you into a debate by saying, “if you don't have fear of God, you are being dis-respectful to God.”

Certainly every real Christian will reverence God. Let's keep the distinction between the reverence for God and the “fear” of God. As love grows in a person, the fears will disappear. Because we love, we do not fear. Because God loves us, we have nothing to fear. There is no fear in love - No slavish fear can be where love reigns. So when we find a person who claims to be a Christian and they are afraid of God - this tells us that they have not yet been FILLED with the love of God - because when we have been filled with God's love - there is no room for the fear.

Fear is in contrast to the confidence that love brings. Fear has to do with the future - and the unknown. (The ‘unknown’ means future events that we do not expect.) There is the fear of death. The love of Christ overcomes this fear. There is the fear of punishment for all that we have done wrong. But Christ has taken all the punishment for our sins. So the love of Christ has taken away that fear as well.

His perfect love takes away all that would make us afraid. The unknown is in the control of God, who loves us. Those who do not love God are right to be afraid.

The day is coming when God will be their judge. Fear has the direct connection to punishment. Fear has a direct connection to our failures and our guilt. Fear has a direct connection to retribution.

Love gives confidence in God. Perfect love is the love that God has for us. It is the love between God and the Christian. Love is perfect when it is complete and mature. Christ brings us the promise of new life. In love, we can be certain about the future.

Read 1 John 4:19 and make notes:

This Verse Explains “Why” A Christian Loves. We love other people because God loved us first. We Christians love God and we love each other.

Some teach that our love is a grateful reaction to God’s love. The way some people teach this verse is that we don't have any choice since he loved us - we are now obligated to love others (legalistic view).

What verse 19 is saying is that we reason we love – is that when he loved us he gave us love. We could not love if God had not loved us first. So it is because He loved us that we now CAN love. We love because he loved us first. He has given us his love. So, we are able to love.

He has provided us with the power to love by his love. The love with which we love is not our own. We do not create it, nor do we, on our own, have the power to express it. It is always the love of God. It is His love in us. So this love also becomes our own love. With this love, we can love God. We can also love each other with the same love.

Read 1 John 4:20 and make notes:

Someone who hates other people does not love God. Some people say that they love God. But they do not really love the Christians. What they say was false. These people are not telling the truth.

If we love God, we WILL love other people. If we do not love our Christian brothers and sisters, we do not love God. Our love for other Christians shows that we love God.

We love Because God loves us. God’s love in us – and that makes us able to love each other. This is the test of our love for God. We may say that we love God. However, if we fail to love each other, we do not really love God.

We can see each other but we cannot see God. If we fail to love each other, we have failed to love God. And love will always show itself in actions.

Read 1 John 4:21 and make notes:

The first command is that we should love God. But to love God is to love our Christian brothers and sisters. We cannot separate the two loves. They are one. If we love God, we will obey him. And his command is that we love each other.

This verse is, like underlining a statement or perhaps putting it in bold print. If we love God we absolutely must love our brother.

Some have tried to analyze and figure out why would that first century reader of this letter need to have such a thing emphasized - that if you love God you have to love your brother. They suggest we should try to figure out why that was so necessary back then but just look around at people today – we're not different - we need to be reminded.

We cannot love God and hate those around us. If we love God, we can't help ourselves, we can't do otherwise. If we try to love God and hate those around us - we are falling way short of the real love that God has given us.

There are a couple of things we should take home with us from this text:

.#1 We Have God's Spirit

Some people would suggest it is because we have a peace of mind. Others might suggest that just we have this confidence when we pray. Others suggests it is just an inward conviction that we have as God's children. And others say it is the evidence of spiritual gifts at work in our lives.

It would be an error to simply say that because the person has true belief - that this alone is evidence that they have God's Spirit. It would also be error to say that because a person loves their fellow man - that alone is evidence that they have God's Spirit. And we've certainly seen enough from practical experience - that just because a person claims to have some charismatic experience - that alone is not evidence that they have God's Spirit.

Instead of spending our time debating about which one of these is the test and evidence - why not accept it that all of these are evidence. Perhaps when it's a balanced combination of all of these - that we have a clear evidence that this person has God living in them and through them.

This sounds a lot like Paul's teaching that says - even if I have the most impressive spiritual gifts - but I don't have Love - then I am just a disturbing noise. By the way, neither Paul or John would have us teach that we shouldn't seek to have spiritual gifts - just that we should have whatever we have in a heart of Love.

.#2 Love And Fear Cannot Live Together

It's an interesting little - fact but fear and love cannot exist together. No cohabitation between love and fear. This is one reason why a person who's in a right relationship with God, who is love, can face the day of judgment without fear.

Some want to debate whether this is talking about God's love for us - or our love for God. It is probably both. If this is talking about God's love for us - then we certainly don't have anything to fear.

When you know someone who loves you - you don't approach them afraid of what they might do to you. On the other hand if this is talking about our love for God - then we simply can't be afraid and love at the same time. When there is a perfect relationship of love - it simply drives out all fear. So, when we are in a perfect relationship of love with God - there will be no fear of God - no fear of his judgment - and no fear of his meeting.

.#3 Benefits To Having God's Spirit

.A. Confidence In Facing Day Of Judgment

.B. No Fear In This Life

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

The text for this lesson is another place where it will help us to remember - that this letter was written primarily to combat false teachers and false teachings. There are many who claim to be children of God, who reject the teachings of Jesus we find in the Bible. They say they are a child of God – we hear somebody else say “no you’re not.”

How do we know who is right? How can we tell who is a Christian and who isn’t? Some will usually chime in at this point and say, “that’s not for us to say – let’s just leave that to God to sort out.” This position can sound fairly generous and maybe even loving at first glance – But the problem is the Bible tells us to steer clear of the False Teachers and to reject and stay away from False Teachings.

If we can’t distinguish one from another – how can we possibly be obedient to this instruction in God’s Word? So, it is important that we be able to distinguish between real Christians and false Christians.

We find an intriguing statement in the Gospel of John - “to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12). Isn’t that an interesting statement? God has given some the “right to become children of God.” How do we get to become part of that group?

It is so easy to find someone openly admitting they are engaging in activities that the Bible declares to be sin – and yet they rationalize why it’s okay with God for them to do these things. There are so many people who don’t hesitate to share their dismissal of some of the very things - the Bible says that a Christian is expected to do and to live out – and this person will tell you why they don’t think that applies to people today.

If we listen to some of the teachings and testimonies that are being presented today – it becomes rather difficult to know who is and who is not – a Christian. Here in this letter of 1st John we are given evidences – or signs – or indications – whereby we can recognize those who have and those who have not been born again. And with all the different “opinions” and ideas and teachings that are being shared today – this little letter has a growing importance in contemporary America.

Read 1 John 5:1 and make notes:

Everyone who holds to the true confession of faith about Jesus has been born of God. This faith in Jesus as the Christ is a major sign or indication that we have experienced the new birth. If a person says with their mouth that they “believe Jesus is the Christ” - we can’t tell what’s in their heart. If a person believes that Jesus is the Christ - then this person has been born again.

But if a person only says this with their mouth and they don’t really believe that Jesus is the Christ – Then they have not been born again. How can we tell that a person really believes that Jesus is the Christ?

If a person has not experienced the New Birth in Jesus Christ then God, that we know as “Heavenly Father”, is not Father to them. Since God is not their father, they do not have the love toward Him that a true child has toward their father. And the person who truly loves their Father, will in turn love their Father’s other children.

So, when we find someone who loves Christians, this is another sign, or indication, that this person has also been born again. And the other side of this coin reads something like this: When we find someone who despises Christians – this is an indication that this person has not been born again.

We must believe that Jesus is the Christ. The false teachers tried to divide Jesus from the Christ.

In their opinion, Christ was God but Jesus was only a man. They taught that God could not die. Therefore the Christ did not die. Those who think like this are not born of God. To be born of God we must believe that Jesus is the Christ.

We must believe that he came to earth. He was both God and man. We must believe that Jesus the Christ died for us.

Some other religions can claim that their leader came from God. Death is a big separator of Christianity from other religions. The leaders of the other world's religions have all died and none have come back from the dead.

For Jesus, physical death was not the end. Jesus Christ rose from death to life. Jesus accomplished what he came to do. He rose from death to prove it.

We must believe that Jesus is the Christ. This is more than just to agree with the mind. We must trust in him. We must accept what he has done for us. As we trust in him, he will change us. God gives us a new life. This is the new birth, when we are born of God.

Read 1 John 5:2 and make notes:

After the previous verse – it would be reasonable to expect to hear something like, “everybody who is born of God MUST love his fellow Christians.” But that’s not what the Holy Spirit inspired John to write down.

In the previous verse we were told that those who love the Father, love His children as well. That can lead some of us to ask ourselves, “how can I tell that I love God’s children?” - “I think I love them – I say that I love them - but how can I be sure that I love them?”

Instead of being told that we “must love” God’s other children, - we are given something we can look for - something we can use to tell whether we do love God’s Children. God has never been the author of confusion. God has always been the provider of ways to rid ourselves of confusion. So, just like He has in so many other areas, - God has given us another measuring stick. One that we can use to see if what we claim to have – is really what we do have.

This is a really good thing because the Devil is going to come to every Believer - and try to convince us that we “don’t really” love other Christians. Just like he does in many areas, Satan tries to get us to doubt our salvation. When Satan comes to a Christian and points to some little something that we failed to do to our fullest ability - and uses that to show us that we don’t really love other Christians - we can pull out this measuring stick and say – “oh yes I do”!

It is possible for us to know that we love God’s children. We do so when we obey God. We must love both him and his children. If we truly love God then we will love other Christians as well. We cannot love God if we do not love his children. And it is NOT possible to really love his children if we do not love God. Hereby we know - This is a plain and simple proof. If we love the children of God - as his children – then we Love God.

Read 1 John 5:3 and make notes:

It isn’t a matter of law where it says that we have to obey God - if we want to qualify for His love. It is a matter of love – where our love for God is seen in the fact that we obey His commands.

The person who is using all sorts of justifications – excuses – and logical reasons - as to why they cannot – or why they should not be expected to - or why these rules just don’t apply to people today - This person is approaching God’s commands from a legal standpoint. And if this was about legalism perhaps many, or all of these reasons, would win.

It is so important that we get this – That we understand this – and carry this with us on a daily basis: If I love you – I want to do “for” you and “to” you the things that you ask of me. If I say I love you – but I give you all sorts of reasons why I am not going to do what you have ask of me – Then the reality is that I do not love you. What you ask of me might not be fair – it might keep me from doing something that I want to do - But if I love you – I will want to do this more than I want to satisfy me.

This is a universal reality – it isn’t a Christian thing – it isn’t a religious thing - It is the reality in a relationship between a man and a woman. It is the reality in a relationship between parents and children. It is the reality in a relationship between friends.

Have you ever had the experience where you thought someone was a close friend - you ask them to do you a favor - and they respond with reasons why this just isn’t convenient for them - or a reason why they just can’t do this for you. Most of us can probably think of several times like this. When this happens, this reveals that this person may like you – they may enjoy spending time with you – But they do not love you!

Part of the universal reality concerning Love – when we love someone – we delight in doing for them – what they want done. We can dice it, slice it, chop it, or stir it - We can debate it, rationalize it, or even deny it - But the universal reality of Love will stand.

“Oh Pastor, Why in the world did you get into this? Because it is the same reality regarding you and me – and our Love for God. If we Love God – then we won’t be bummed out when doing what He wants - keeps us from doing something we had planned. If we love God – then keeping His commandments will never be a burden. And it will never be complained about by us as a hardship.

We obey God’s commands because we love God. Love for God is this, that we obey his commands. This is how we express our love for God. If we love God, we will desire to obey his commands.

This is the essential “result” of our love for God. It is not a legal requirement. Jesus said something that applies well in this text, “my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:30). His commands are not too difficult for us. They are not too hard because God makes us able to do them.

The Christian likes to do whatever God wants. For this is the love of God – in fact, it’s the only sure proof of it.

What should we take home with us from this text?

Some of us may remember a line from a movie years ago. Two young boys who were brothers were walking to a special place that had been created for boys who needed help. When the little brother was just too tired to walk any further, the older brother put him on his back and carried him. Someone remarked that that he must be heavy to carry. The boy remarked, “he ain’t heavy, he’s my brother.”

For those who Love God – Keeping God’s commandments are not a burden – and keeping God’s commands do not rob us of our happiness. We want to keep God’s commandments because we Love Him! Jesus gave us a Reader’s Digest version of the Ten Commandments - Jesus said that we must “Love God” and then we must “Love Others.”

Jesus tells us in the N.T. - that if we always act in Love toward other people, that we will never violate the law. This makes “Love” and Living out our lives in Love a rather important thing for Christians. But “Living out” our lives “in love” is not a legal requirement for being a Christian. “Living out” our lives in love is the “result” of being a real Christian.

The invitation to become a Christian - Or the invitation to live the Christian lifestyle - is not at all about legal requirements of “thou shall nots.” It is an invitation to come and know the God of heaven and earth in a personal relationship. It is an invitation to come and receive the Love He desires to pour out upon us and into us. It is an invitation to accept the love of God for the people of this earth into our heart. It is an invitation to live out our daily life touching those around us in love. That is what the Christian invitation is all about.

Today, we hear much about the militant arm of the Islamic religion. They are in the news every week. The foundation of their religion calls them to hate everyone who is not of their religion. The foundation of their religion tells them that they must do works in order to earn their right to their version of heaven. The foundation of their religion tells them that they can get a fast-forward to heaven – If they will go out and splatter their blood and die in the process of killing non-believers. That to me is a very sad religion

This is a very big difference between Islam and Christianity. In Christianity we are told to “love our enemies” – not just those who are non-believers. In Christianity we are told we could never earn our way to heaven. In Christianity we are told that Jesus shed His blood so that we don’t have to shed ours.

Let’s keep this simple. Even if you aren’t a deep theological person - which is better from where you are - a religion that tells you that you must shed your blood while killing others - or a religion that tells you Jesus shed His blood in your place?

Which is better from where you are - a religion that tells you to hate those who do not believe as you do - or a religion that tells you to love even your enemies – not just non-believers?

Which is better from where you are - a religion that tells you there are many rules about what you can do and cannot do - or a religion that tells you that as long as you act in the Love of God toward others - yhat you will never violate the Law?

Dear Friends – this is how we can tell a person has been born of God: They love other Christians and they love people.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

There is a story of a time when D. L. Moody was to speak to several thousand prisoners in a state penitentiary. It had been announced that after Mr. Moody preached, a pardon would be presented by the governor to one of the prisoners. No one but the governor knew who the fortunate prisoner was. The excitement among the prisoners was high.

Finally the moment came – Moody had finished preaching. The governor stepped forward with a pardon in his hand. He read out a name. There was a wave of applause but no one came forward. He called out the name a second time. Still the prisoner did not move from his seat, he was held to his seat by his unbelief that he, a man sentenced to life in prison, could be granted freedom.

Finally, nearby companions pushed him from his seat, and the man came forward with tears streaming down his cheeks to take the pardon from the hand of the governor. Then the warden commanded the audience of prisoners to fall in and march back to their cells.

When the cellmates came marching past him, the man, still holding the pardon, just fell in line in his usual place and begin the march back to his established place behind the bars. One of the guards pulled him from the line saying, "Man, don t you know you are free!" "You are no longer a prisoner!"

This story illustrates the manner in which so many Christians fail to believe the promises of God. The natural man watches death and disease destroy the health and life of bodies. As a result the natural man sees death and many diseases as uncontrollable and unstoppable – things to be feared and dreaded. The natural man observes some wicked person, or group of people, take advantage of others - and apparently gets away with doing it. So the natural man sees certain wicked people as uncontrollable – and something to be feared. The natural man witnesses the works of Satan and stands in awe of the destructive power of Satan - and very often sees Satan as uncontrollable.

The Holy Spirit, speaking through John, plainly states that the believer overcomes the world. This statement doesn't seem to harmonize with the defeated lives of many of God's children today. All around us are those who declare positively that they believe in Jesus, and yet admit they are living defeated lives – instead of living the life of an overcomer.

What does the life of an overcomer look like? First let me tell you what the Life of an overcomer is not: It is not the life of an overcomer when it is a life without fruit. We are commanded by the Lord to bear fruit. Jesus said, "My Father is glorified when you bear much fruit" (John 15:8).

It is not the life of an overcomer when it is a life without power. Jesus said, "You will receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you: (Acts 1:8). Let me put this simply, if the power were present, the life would not be defeated.

It is not the life of an overcomer when it is a life without a positive influence. The life of the victorious Christian points people toward the Lord. The defeated life has no positive influence – and often pushes people away from Christ.

It is not the life of an overcomer when it is a life dominated by the flesh. The Corinthians were defeated Christians. Paul called them "babes in Christ." They were carnal, not spiritual.

It is not the life of an overcomer when it is a life dictated by the world. John tells us, "Not to love the world or the things of the world" (I John 2:15). We are warned about the danger of loving the world. The defeated life is dominated by the world, the flesh and the Devil - These three enemies constantly work for the defeat of a Christian.

Now that we have fairly good picture of a life that is not an overcomer - Lets look at the text for this lesson.

Read 1 John 5:4 and make notes:

The first part of this verse is an exciting statement - “everyone born of God overcomes the world!” When we become a Christian – I’m talking about becoming a Real Christian – I’m not talking about making a confession – I’m not talking about making a decision – I’m not talking about going through some ritual or ceremony – I’m talking about not only confessing with our mouth “Jesus is Lord” – But believing in our heart that He was raised from the dead. I’m talking about truly loving the Heavenly Father – and along with our Faith that He will do all that His Word says He will do we also love Him and desire to please Him.

When we become a Christian – God gives us the power to overcome the forces of temptation. You know those forces of temptation that have so often prevented us from being obedient to God’s commands. When we become a Christian – God gives us the power to overcome false teachers and false prophets.

Many in this world are looking for a some rock or amulet that has power- and others are looking for some specific incantation that has power - and others are looking for some special food – or combination of foods that has power. The Power that helps us overcome this world – is not found in or through anything on or of this earth. The Power that helps us overcome this world comes to us through the vehicle of our Faith in Jesus Christ.

The second part of this verse says there is “a victory that HAS overcome the world” - while the first part of this verse says “everyone born of God OVERCOMES the world.” Just to split hairs for a moment – everyone who is born of God has not overcome the world at this time. But everyone who is born of God does eventually overcome the world.

Some who are born of God have already overcome the world. Others who are born of God are in the process of overcoming the world. And the rest of those who are born of God will overcome the world.

The vehicle of this overcoming – or the means of this overcoming - Is our Faith in Jesus and our Faith in God’s Word. Our faith helps us to overcome everything that opposes us. We can obey God because we have overcome the world. We trust in Jesus. This gives us success in the struggle. We overcome because we are born of God.

It is because of the birth from God, we overcome the world. This new birth makes it possible for us to be free from the world’s influence. This new birth makes it possible for us to be free from the rule of the devil. This new birth makes us children of God.

The world frequently tries to tempt Christians to do wrong things. Many things try to destroy our trust in the Lord Jesus. But in all these things, God gives the strength to be an overcomer. Jesus has already fought the battle for us and he has won. We are born into the success that Jesus won. We are now expected to go on in that success. By trusting in him, we can overcome the world in our daily life.

It is through our faith that we win. Faith is our trust in Christ and what we believe. We believe that Jesus is the Christ. And we believe that he is the Son of God. We trust him to save us and to keep us from all evil. We expect him to do all that God has promised.

This belief and trust helps us to the defeat of the world. Through our faith we overcome the world. Those who truly believe that Jesus has already overcome the world – Those who truly believe that Jesus has already overcome the devil – Those who truly believe that Jesus has already overcome the power of death - Find it easy to believe that if Jesus can defeat death – then He can defeat anything. And it is easy for us to truly believe that Jesus will share that “overcoming” with us. And that we too will overcome this world – and overcome everything associated with this world.

So when the end comes – everyone who is born of God is an over-comer – and not one person who is born of God will fail to overcome this world. So you can see, that our Faith is the means of each one of us receiving the Power to Overcome. Our Faith in Jesus is not an escape from all conflict – nor from all troubled times – or even all temptations. All of these things come to the person of Faith – just like the do everyone else.

The difference is that the person with Faith in Jesus overcomes while the person without Faith in Jesus succumbs. Faith in Jesus Christ is the power that enables us to control what appears to be uncontrollable to the natural man. Faith in Jesus gives us the power to stop the things that appear to be unstoppable to the natural man. Faith in Jesus is the conduit through which we receive the power to resist the temptations that drag so many down into defeat and destruction. Faith in Jesus is the very means through which we receive the power to resist the temptations that have so often in the past dragged us down.

Let me share with the 4 steps to becoming an Overcomer:

The First step is to become a Brother or a Sister to Jesus –
that is to be saved.

The Second step is to grow in our knowledge of God's Word.

The Third step is to grow in our personal relationship with Jesus –

Who is our Brother – as well as our Savior – as well as our redeemer.

The Fourth step is to grow and develop our Faith until we receive the
power to overcome this world and all of its temptations.

It has never been God's will or His plan that we should have some religious experience here on earth - and then just wait around until the train leaves for Glory Land! God's will and His plan is for us to overcome This World - even before we enter into that wonderful marvelous place He is preparing for us.

God wants us to be victorious! Satan wants us to be defeated!

Our soul is beyond Satan's reach, but we can still be touched through the world and his subtle suggestions. What a dead drag the defeated Christian is to himself and to all around him! What a hindrance to the cause of Christ! The defeated Christian doesn't glorify God, and he constantly sheds a negative influence of defeatism on others. But do you see what today's texts says?

Read 1 John 5:4 and make notes:

Who is born of God? We have already been told that back in verse 1 of chapter 5: *“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...”* Who overcomes the world? The one who is born of God.

When we become a child of God, the victory begins. When we are saved, all of the essentials for victory are in our possession. Plainly, we are told in this little letter that no one can overcome the world except he who is born of the Spirit. Are you born of God? If so, Then you can be an overcomer.

But how do we overcome? The answer — by faith. “This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.” By the same faith through which we were saved, we can overcome the world. This victory is not accomplished all at one stroke. It is a lifestyle and process. We are to be overcomers day by day as we exercise our faith.

Here is a verse we need to remember - Romans 10:17 *“...faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” This was true in our salvation. We had to hear the Word of God; we were convicted by the Holy Spirit, and we received Christ as Saviour.*

It is also true in the life of conquest. If there is to be overcoming faith, then we must turn to the infallible Word of God. We harbor doubts about salvation because we don't take the assurance of the Word of God. We live poor, limping, halting lives because we don't believe the promise that God will supply every need, take care of every emergency.

Let us begin to practice our faith, - Let us begin to believe the promises, - Let us begin to be inspired in our daily practice of our faith in God. An overcomer is someone who overcomes. An overcomer is someone who comes over to God's side and God's way.

If we are going to be saved we to have to come over to God's way of thinking. A person, who overcomes, comes over to God's way of thinking. When we get saved there are obstacles to come over. Are we willing to come over to God's way of thinking?

This verse is trying to tell us that we are anointed to come over. We need to stop thinking like the world thinks. We need to come over to God's way of thinking. We need to stop doubting like the world doubts. We need to come over to God's place of faith. We need to stop fretting like the world frets. We need to come over to God's place of hope and encouragement. We simply have to come over.

The evil one mocks our Faith. The evil one tells us that it is useless, hopeless, and impossible. The evil one will speak to us and say, "Give up."

There is a constant battle everyday with our faith. Satan is on one side tempting us with despair and unbelief. He is inviting us to come over to his side. And God is on the other side. His message is clear and powerful. He tells us that we are anointed to come over to the truth.

Satan tries to scare us with the facts of this world. He tries to scare us to come over to his side. But we have been given the truth. We can laugh at Satan and declare, "I am anointed to come over." - "I am anointed to overcome." - "I have come over."

God wants us to overcome our past. God wants us to overcome our unbelief. God wants us to overcome our sins. God wants us to overcome our discouragement.

Matthew 16:18 tells us that the gates of hell will not overcome the Church.

Revelation 3:21 tells us that those who overcome, will be given the right to sit with Jesus on His throne.

Revelation 12:11 tells us that Christians overcome by the Blood of the Lamb.

Friends, Jesus has already shed His blood - We don't need to wait for some future time to become an overcomer! The Lord invites us to live as an overcomer. We are anointed to be an overcomer.

So, How can we live as an over comer? We come over to the Lord's truth. We don't deny the facts. But We aren't scared by the facts. We come over to the Lord's truth. In Isaiah 53:1, Isaiah asks the question, "*Who has believed the report?*" God asks us the same question - Who has believed the report? - Who has believed the message? - Who has believed what we have heard and seen? - Who is it that has clung to the truth?

The answer to the question hopefully is: "We have!" We are anointed to come over. We believe the report of the Lord! When the evil one says, "It can't be done." We answer with the truth. Philippians 4:13 tells us that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

When the evil one says, "Healing is not for today." We answer with the truth. Isaiah 53:5 tells us that "by His stripes we have been healed" James 5:14 tells us that if we are sick, we should call for the elders of the church to anoint us with oil and to pray for us. And then we are told in James 5:15 – that the prayer of faith will make the sick person well.

When the evil one says, "You can't have joy." We answer with the truth. Nehemiah 8:10 tells us that the Joy of the Lord is our strength. Psalms 30:5 tells us that weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.

We are anointed to come over. We are anointed to overcome.

When the evil one speaks and says, "I will defeat you!" We will answer with the truth!
Romans 8:31 tells us that if God is for us – who can be against us?
Romans 8:37 tells us that in all these things – we are more than conquerors.
Because we are anointed to come over.

1 John - 29 – Be An Overcomer

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Some people run for an elected office once – sometimes twice – and lose - then they never run again – they accept the rejection – and the defeat. Abraham Lincoln ran for public office 4 or 5 times and lost. At one point during these years, he fell into depression so bad that he was bedridden but he overcame the rejection and defeat and went back to running for office until he was elected President of the United States of America.

There is such a large number of people who feel called to missions - and will go around getting support money from churches and individuals - then they go to the mission field – have an unpleasant experience – then they quit missions all together. Paul went as a missionary to the Gentile peoples of the world in his day – he experienced a number of life threatening experiences – where people actually intended to kill him but Paul overcame the rejection and the hardships - and kept on planting churches and appointing ministers and elders in several places.

If we listen to their advertisements, there are several shoe manufacturers that want us to believe that having the right shoes will make us winners. This builds on a general attitude in our society that we can overcome any obstacle if we just have the right equipment.

There is another generally held saying that tells us that we can overcome anything – if we have the right attitude. Attitude comes from what we believe. And belief is a powerful force. The mind is a powerful force. If we believe in something or someone strong enough, it has an effect.

Some say the mind can either help us heal or help us die. It all depends on what we think and what we believe. Studies show that those with positive attitudes heal much quicker than those with poor attitudes. The same is true for those who approach business, marriage, finances, etc with a positive attitude. Winners believe they are winners before it actually comes true.

Many Bible scholars and teachers have declared V5 to be only a bridge or a segue from one teaching or point in 1st John to another. I wish to point out to you today, that V5 is a powerful message of hope and encouragement for Christians.

Read 1 John 5:5 and make notes:

One way you can read this verse is to see it beginning with something of a rhetorical question:

“Can anyone overcome the world?” The implied answer is “only those who believe Jesus is the Son of God.”

In verse 1 of this chapter, Jesus was called the “Christ.” Here in verse 5 Jesus is called the “Son of God.” Some may suggest that this is so slight a shift in terminology that it doesn't amount to much. However, it is a most emphatic shift in terminology – and one that becomes even more significant in the verses that will follow verse 5.

Calling Jesus “Christ” is important when the emphasis is on Him being the much awaited and anticipated Messiah. But calling Jesus the “Son of God” is important when the emphasis is on Him having the Power of God.

Only the person who believes that Jesus is the Son of God could believe that Jesus actually has the Power of God. And only the person who believes that Jesus has the Power of God could believe that Jesus has the power to help us overcome the powerful pulls the powerful strings – and the powerful temptations this world has on us.

Because Jesus – as the Son of God – has the Power of God. Jesus has the power that is greater than the power of the Devil. As long as people believe anything less about Jesus – they will struggle and falter in their efforts to overcome the world and the hold this world has on them. As long as a person believes Jesus is anything less than the Son of God – they will not believe that Jesus has the ability to save them from the power of this godless world. Only those people who trust in Christ overcome the world.

To win in this fight we have to believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that he is the Son of God. He is God and he became a man. As God and man, he overcame the world. Nobody else can give us the power to win in this struggle. We trust in Jesus. Then we share in what he has done. So, he makes us able to overcome.

Who is he that overcomes the world - Who is superior to all worldly care, desire, fear? Every believer in Jesus as Son of God! Everyone that is born of God is an overcomer. An overcomer is someone who overcomes. An overcomer is someone who “comes over.”

If you remember from the last lesson coming from 1st John, we said that an overcomer is one who has come over to God's way of thinking. Everyone who is a Christian already has the potential to be an overcomer in this world! The message of becoming an “overcomer” is as old as the Old Testament:

Read Jeremiah 1:19 and make notes:

God promised His obedient children thousands of years ago in summary -”as long as you are obedient to me – I will make sure you are not overcome by your enemies - I will make you an overcomer.” This is a belief that overcomes the world. It is a saving belief - It is a belief that Jesus not only saves, - Jesus also sanctifies and empowers, - And Jesus he satisfies. It is a belief that Jesus can satisfy the deepest longings of our heart with a superior satisfaction in him.

When we believe like this about Jesus - God is glorified, Sin is defeated, and Satan is dealt a savage blow. When we believe the promises of God in Jesus Christ are not only true, but better than anything the world promises, - we have a saving belief that overcomes the world.

If something besides Jesus is required to satisfy us, then that thing has become our god. We say to Jesus in effect, “You are not enough, I need something more.” And in the process we may look like we are loving Christ but in fact we are using him to obtain something we prefer over him. This is sending a message to God that we want the gift but not the Giver - Redemption but not the Redeemer - the kingdom but not the King - the healing but not the Great Physician - Eternal life but not the Eternal One - Salvation but not our Savior - Liberation from sin but not the Liberator.

In sum, we want everything God has to offer except the gift of Himself. 1 Peter 3:18 reminds us why Jesus lived, died, and arose from the dead. “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.” The best thing Jesus ever did for us, and the best thing Jesus could do for us, is free us from our slavery to things that separate us from loving him fully and forever in heaven. Let us always keep vigilant that our Lord - not His gifts - be our supreme treasure.

Please don't forget this: Belief is useless if it is not acted upon.

Perhaps Jesus puts it most succinctly (John 16:33): “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” That's a pretty broad statement, and one that is true on any pretty much any level of interpretation. However, a statement from earlier in 1 John gives us a more specific definition: “For everything in the world-the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-comes not from the Father but from the world.” (1 John 2:16) So we can take comfort in knowing that believing in Jesus is the ticket to overcoming these sinful trappings of the world.

True, sincere, belief in Jesus is the first, and most important step, but consistently overcoming the world is more of a journey. A genuine belief that Jesus is the son of God will inspire us to act in love, in mercy, in faith; it will inspire us to trust that God is With Us. It is the only chance we have. It is the only chance to be found anywhere in this world.

The verse for this lesson tells us who overcomes the world and what overcomes the world. “For everyone born of God overcomes the world.” This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

Who overcomes the world? Those born of God.

Who overcomes the world? Those who believe Jesus is the Son of God.

It is our belief in Jesus as the Son of God - that allows us to have the faith necessary to stop allowing the world to have victory over us. We become the victor not the victim. Winning has nothing to do with having or wearing the right shoes – Or any other worldly article. It has everything to do with faith in the right person.

Jesus Christ is that person. He once said that He overcame the world. And those who believe in Him will overcome the world. That makes us over-comers, victors, and free.

Look again at our verse from 1st John 5:5:

Jesus was not “of this world” – Jesus was not limited by the physics and laws of this world - Jesus was not limited by the attitudes of this world. That’s a part of how Jesus was able to “overcome” this world – and it’s death.

Jesus tells us that as members of the Heavenly Kingdom – Christians are “in the World” – but we “are not of the world”! And when we accept citizenship in the Heavenly Kingdom of which Jesus belongs. He gives us the ability and privilege to no longer be limited by the physics and laws of this world. As long as we believe we are limited by this world – then we will not be able to do any better than what the current world situation dictates to us!

However, if we accept and believe we are limited only by the limitations of the Heavenly Kingdom - then we will be able do better than this world tells us we can do. There is a great number of people who start going to some local church - then something bad and painful happens in that church – and they never go to church again.

I have met a large number of people who say they will never be part of a church again because they were hurt at a church – and sometimes it happened many years ago. Yet others overcome the hurt – which is sometimes very personal - when they become the new person in Jesus and continue to not only go to church – but to take an active roll in a local church.

Some people have a very bad marriage – or they ruin a good marriage - and decide that they cannot be a part of ministry ever again. Others overcome their mistakes – as they surrender to Jesus - and go on to be very anointed and productive ministers

Some people make dumb and seriously bad mistakes as young teenagers or young adults and decide that they cannot be a part of ministry because of what they have done. While others overcome their mistakes and sins – as they accept Jesus – and are very useful and active ministers

So, where are we today? Are we one of the great multitude of defeated people? Or – have we become one of the Overcomers ?

A few years ago in the financial collapse of our nations economy, many people suffered financial loss - some went under – were forced to go bankrupt. These reports were in the daily news for quite some time. What was not in the News? That many who suffered real financial loss - overcame the failing economy - overcame the in-availability of jobs - overcame the negative messages of our society - and ended that year as an Overcomer.

A large number in the congregation where I served as pastor at that time, suffered great financial loss. Because many of those in our local congregation were over-comers - our church finished the year as an overcomer financially - in what proved to be a difficult year financially for many churches. We had to make a lot of adjustments – but we were overcomers!

1 John - 30 - Live As An Overcomer

Who wants help in becoming an overcomer this year? Jesus gives us power to:
Overcome our past -
overcome lying -
overcome stealing -
overcome adultery -
overcome fornication -
overcome bad relationships -
overcome addictions -
overcome eating disorders -
overcome physical violence -
overcome financial markets -
overcome whatever this world throws at us.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

There was a man named Cerinthus, who lived at Ephesus in John's day. He was typical of the many false teachers. Cerinthus was a conspicuous and enterprising teacher. Most people considered his teachings to be profound. He was seen as noticeably more philosophical than the average teacher. Cerinthus looked down upon John as an old man, a Galilean who was pious enough to be given some respect. But he saw John as being very simple in his ways, and rather uncultured.

Cerinthus concluded that John's views were unspiritual and unfit for the God of the universe. He pointed to many "mistakes" he saw in John's teachings that should be avoided. One mistake Cerinthus pointed out was that John failed to distinguish between "Jesus", and "Christ". Cerinthus admitted that there was a man named Jesus – but was quick to point out that this Jesus was certainly not supernaturally born. He said Jesus was just a normal person – who at his baptism received some kind of Heavenly power – and from that point was able to perform miracles. Cerinthus insisted that this Heavenly imparting was removed from Jesus just before he died on the cross.

Cerinthus was eloquent and compelling in his arguments as he taught that any other view was simply unfit for God. There were many who considered Cerinthus a better teacher than John. Cerinthus was more interesting to listen to - Cerinthus had more personal charisma than John.

John was faced with the question:

How does a simple teacher or preacher of the Gospel compete with the flashy and impressive philosophers of this world? And this is very relevant to Believers today.

How do we – by sharing our simple testimony of what God has done for me – How do we compete with the flash – the razzle and dazzle of this world?

Read 1 John 5:6 and make notes:

When we read this text slowly and consider each part it seems rather obvious that this statement was intended to grab the attention of the original readers. “The person I am writing about is the One who came by water and by blood – you know, Jesus Christ.” So it must have had some kind of impact for those in John’s day. By identifying Jesus as one who came by both “water and blood” – appears to be convincing testimony – at least to them if not us.

In an effort to make this statement have more meaning to contemporary readers – a number of Bible Scholars have offered suggested original meanings and explanations for this text. Some want us to see it as referring to the literal birth of Jesus, as the Divine, took on a fleshly body.

That’s a pretty narrow meaning of the phrase “water and blood” – and the biggest problem with this interpretation is that, except for Adam and Eve, that’s how everybody is born – so doesn’t seem to set Jesus apart in any way.

The original meaning, as the Holy Spirit inspired John to write this down – must have had some broader meaning – and it in some way point to Jesus as being set apart from all others on earth. One of the interpretations that has the most broad application, views this as referring to the “water of Jesus’ baptism” and to the “blood of Jesus’ suffering and death.”

Those who have not “zoned out” on me yet, can probably think – “a lot of people were baptized” and “a lot of people were beaten and crucified” - and we would have to say that’s true. But there is something different about Jesus’ baptism and something different about Jesus’ death. When Jesus was baptized – the Father in Heaven was heard speaking out loud that this is “my son in whom I am well pleased” - at the same time the Holy Spirit was seen descending upon Jesus in the form of a dove. Do we know of anyone else who has had such a divine testimony when they were baptized?

When Jesus died for our sins – the Father in Heaven ripped open the veil that separated the average person from the presence of God – and the Spirit of God clothed Jesus in a glorified body as He was brought back to life from death. Do we know of anyone else who has come back to life after being dead three days – and returned in glorified body?

Please don't lose sight of the fact that this letter was written to combat the false teachers. Some of them were teaching the people that the earthly Jesus died, but not the Heavenly Divine Jesus.

One of their teachings was that when Jesus was baptized, the Heavenly Divine Christ came down and took up residence in the earthly Jesus – And this Divine Christ lifted and departed from His body before He died. They could point to the fact that when Jesus on the cross, he felt as though God was no longer with Him, as appearing to support their view.

The false teachers didn't deny that a man called Jesus was baptized and crucified. But they attached a very different significance to his baptism and to his crucifixion. One really big problem with the position the false teachers take - with only the earthly Jesus dying and not the Divine Jesus – How could the death of any earthly person ever be enough to pay for the sins of all mankind? As soon as we reduce the death of Jesus to the death of a mere man – we lose the New Testament doctrine of atonement for sin.

The Holy Spirit speaking through John was saying something significantly different from these false teachers. He is saying that it was in fact the Divine Christ who was baptized and it was the Divine Christ who died on that cross.

It wasn't the Divine Christ which descended upon the earthly Jesus at His baptism. It was the Holy Spirit descending to bear witness that this was indeed the Divine Christ. God's love for us is clearly revealed in His willingness to allow His Divine Son to die in our place. God was in Christ – reconciling the world to Himself. The New Testament doctrine of atonement means that God Himself took on our sins – and then He paid the penalty our sins that we were required to pay.

There must be something attractive to the modern thinker – much like it was to those in John's day – in the idea that it was only a mere man that died on the cross. But please consider: If the Divine Christ did not die for our sins – we are all hopelessly doomed to an eternity in Hell separated from God. And any teaching that reduces the death of Jesus from a Divine Death to a mere fleshly death – Also takes away our assurance that God's love for us is a “sin bearing” love.

1 John - 31 – Confirm Testimony

Jesus and the Christ are one person. The Spirit tells us that Jesus is the Christ in both his baptism and his death.

Read 1 John 5:7-8 and make notes:

In verse 6, only one witness was spoken of – the Holy Spirit. Now we are told there are in fact Three Witnesses. There are three witnesses that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Under the old law there had to be two or three witnesses to prove a matter (Deuteronomy 19:15). The Spirit of God tells us the same thing as the water and the blood. We can depend on the evidence of these three witnesses. This evidence shows that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

The Water and the Blood are given place as each being a witness along side the testimony of the Spirit. “The three are in agreement” - This is a rather significant statement - one that would probably have more impact on those in the legal profession than it does on the average person. If the Spirit, the water, and the blood are all three witnesses giving testimony. And the testimony of all three are in agreement - Then the testimony of these three stands together or falls together.

It is impossible to say we accept the testimony of one – or two – of these but we reject the testimony of the other. If we accept even one of these as a valid and true testimony – then we are bound to accept the other two. If we reject the testimony of even one of these as a false – or untrue – testimony – then we are bound to reject all three. This statement provides a powerful argument against the false teaching that says the Divine Jesus did not die.

So, what is it that we should take home with us from this text ?

The false teachers today – just like the false teachers in John’s day – can present some compelling arguments – and they are able to cause people to see reasons why they should reject various teachings of the Christian faith. But it is really hard to convince someone that the Word of God is not true - who has personally experienced the Baptism in Jesus - and who has personally experienced the Blood of Jesus.

The Spirit, the Water, and the Blood – are still giving testimony today. Most Bible Scholars will agree that the Spirit is a current and active witness. However, some want to argue that the Water and the Blood of Jesus are both past tense witnesses today. Don’t be too quick to take hold of this view.

Hebrews 11:4 tells us regarding Abel, “by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead.” If we accept this simple statement from the New Testament – then we should also accept as truth - that the Baptism of Jesus and the Blood of Jesus still speaks today, even though they historically happened a long time ago.

Verse 6 says the Spirit “Testifies”

Verse 7 says “Three that Testify”

Verse 8 says the Spirit, Water, and Blood “Are In Agreement”

Please notice that this message is something of a present tense statement: the Spirit “TESTIFIES” and the “Three That Testify” - rather than “TESTIFIED”, past tense or “WILL TESTIFY”, future tense - and they “Are In Agreement” – not “WAS” or “WILL BE.”

The Holy Spirit is a very present witness in the heart and soul of a Believer. The Holy Spirit gives current and active testimony in the teaching and preaching of God’s Word. The Holy Spirit gives current and active testimony as a Believer shares their personal testimony of what God has done in their life. It is the Holy Spirit who testifies to the heart and soul of a lost person that convinces them of the reality of God. It is never our wise and effective debating skills. It is never our intelligent discussions. It is never our preaching or our testimony. It is the testimony of the Holy Spirit that wins a soul over to God’s way of thinking.

1 John - 31 – Confirm Testimony

It was the Holy Spirit who testified to the prophets of the Old Testament – and gave them the words to say about the future coming of the Messiah. It was the Holy Spirit that testified to the people in Jesus' earthly ministry days – and convinced them that Jesus was in fact the Messiah they had been waiting for. It was the Holy Spirit who was giving witness to the hearts of Believers in John's day that Jesus was the Divine Christ who died for them.

It IS the Holy Spirit today who testifies to the people when we share what God has done for me – or in my life. Yes, the Holy Spirit is a very present and continual witness – who gives true and current testimony. Look at what the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to tell the Romans:

Read Romans 6:3-7 and make notes:

People are still being Baptized into the Baptism of Jesus today - And people are still being cleansed by the Blood of Jesus today. That's pretty contemporary – or current – isn't it? Jesus, The Christ, came by Water to cleanse us - Jesus, The Christ, came by Blood to redeem us. Those who are born again into the Kingdom of God today, are born by the Water and the Blood of Jesus! Water brings cleansing - Blood brings life - Spirit brings faith.

There are a number of places in the New Testament where the Word of God is referred to as Water. And there are some other things in the New Testament that have bearing at this point.

How can we be saved unless we hear the Word of God? How can we hear the Word of God if no one Teachers or Preachers the Word of God? How can anyone understand the Word of God unless the Spirit reveals it to them?

It is the Spirit that convicts a person as they hear the Word of God. Let's face it, people just don't get saved when they never hear the Word of God – In some form or fashion.

1 John - 31 – Confirm Testimony

The Spirit is still giving testimony that Jesus is the Christ - and as we share, what we may believe to be a simple testimony - it is the Spirit of God that makes it real and powerful to those who hear it.

However, if we never give testimony – then the Holy Spirit doesn't have anything to confirm! We may be one who feels that our personal testimony is all that impressive. Just share it and let the Holy Spirit make it what it needs to be to that person who is hearing it.

There are many people on this earth who are turned off by the “big impressive” testimonies. They are only going to listen to the simple and humble testimony. We may be one of those who feels we just don't have the verbal skills to share our testimony - or maybe we are just so shy that it scares us thoroughly.

We need to quit worrying about our skills and ability. That is a bad use of pride – Yes, I did say “pride.” It is not us – our testimony – and it certainly isn't our oratory skills. It is the Holy Spirit that confirms the testimony to those who hear it. It is God's plan that each one of us share with those we meet in our everyday situations and circumstances “what God has done for me.”

But if for some reason you can't do that right now - then at least invite them to church where they will hear the Word of God. And they might meet someone else who will tell them what God has done for me.

I am committed to teach the Word of God as faithfully as a human being can. And if others will be faithful to share what Jesus has done for them - that gives the Holy Spirit something to work with. Our Silence is a serious hindrance to the Holy Spirit's ministry to the Lost.

How many of us want to be guilty of that?

How many of us want to be faithful to give the Holy Spirit something to confirm?

1 John - 31 – Confirm Testimony

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Most of us can no doubt remember singing a song – either as children or as adults that says, “Jesus Loves Me This I Know, For The Bible Tells Me So.” It really is a great song – and as an adult, on more than one occasion I have felt inspired to sing this simple song – and have sung this song. But if we are honest, we have to admit, that just because something is said in the Bible – does not automatically make us believe it.

I have lost track of how many times I have shown someone a Scripture that speaks to the very problem they are facing – or the sin they have committed – and the person replies with something like “I don’t know” – or “I sure hope that is true” – and the all so frequent “yeah, but.”

What a great day it is in the life of any Believer, when we can move from the “I hope this is true” to the place where we “Know This Is True”. The great majority of people don’t really need to know the deep theological principles found in God’s Word. The mass majority of people would find freedom from shame, guilt, and in many cases depression and self-loathing - If they could know – and I mean really know beyond a shadow of doubt – that Jesus Loves Me!

There is an old movie – I believe the name of the movie was simply “Harvey.” Jimmy Stewart played a character in this movie – I don’t remember the name of the character he played – I only remember the name of Harvey. He was a 6 foot white rabbit that went everywhere with Jimmy Stewart’s character. Jimmy Stewart carried on conversations with Harvey – and what makes this worth mentioning – no one could see Harvey except Jimmy Stewart’s character.

The rest of the people in this movie decided Jimmy Stewart’s character must be crazy because he keeps talking to someone they can’t see. They decide that he needs to be put into an institution for people with mental disorders. Does anyone here feel connected to the character in this old movie?

We Christians not only talk about God – but many of us actually talk to God – and the people of this world can’t see God. So they conclude – we must be crazy – because we are talking to someone they can’t see. Or they decide we must be crazy because we put our trust in God, that they can’t see.

How do we Know that God is really here – or there – or wherever we believe God is? How do we come to know anything – that we claim to know?

Someone may say that we come to know things by being taught by others. But just because someone teaches us something – doesn't mean we know it. Just look at how many people fail test given after someone has taught. And the truth is that just because someone put the right answer down on a test does not mean they "know" that.

If we know the teacher is going to punish us if we don't put down the answer they want to see - and we don't believe the answer they want to see is correct - many of us will put down the answer the teacher wants to see – just to avoid the punishment. But we don't believe what we put down. So, how do we know anything?

I have come to the conclusion that we know things from our personal experiences. Sure, someone tells us something – they "teach us" something – but if we do not trust the person telling us – if we do not believe what they say – We don't "know it" until we have some experience that convinces us that it is true.

It is so unfortunate, but many of us don't "know" something until we have been "burned" by it. Only after we have experienced the pain of a bad decision – do we believe what that person was telling us - that it would be a bad decision is true.

When a complete stranger says to us "you can trust me" – how many of us "trust them"? Too often young children do this – but as adults – we are not so quick to trust someone. Only after we have had some experiences with someone – and see something of their nature – their abilities – the kind of decisions they make – would be able to trust them.

Children just naturally love their parents – and want to be with them – when they are little. Then there comes a day – when the children begin to doubt everything the parent says, and maybe everything the parent believes. Then the parent begins to pray earnestly that their child learns from someone else experiencing the pain instead of having to experience the pain personally. But the reality is that very often, it takes some personal experience, before the older child believes what the parent has said.

Okay, Children of God, are we paying attention this?

Read 1 John 5:9 and make notes:

We usually believe people who are witnesses to an event. They may not be telling the truth. It is normal for us to believe what people say. And yet many people do not tell the truth – not only because they tend to lie - but often they didn't see or hear exactly what they think they heard or saw.

God always tells the truth. We should be more ready to believe what God says. God's words are more important than people's words. God speaks what he knows. Nobody else can speak with such authority. God knew his Son before he made the world. God the Father has said about Jesus Christ, "This is my Son."

In the past, God spoke by the evidence of the water and the blood. God still speaks to us today. If we receive the testimony of men - As we do continually, and must do in a thousand instances.

The testimony of God is greater – It is of a higher authority, and much more worthy to be received; it is the very testimony which God the Father, together with the Word and the Spirit, has testified of the Son, as the Savior of the world.

1 John - 32 – God's Testimony

The witness of the Spirit is in reality God's testimony of and to Jesus. We routinely accept testimony of a human being unless they have given or demonstrated a reason why their testimony is not reliable. God's testimony is far greater than that of any human being, any where, at any time.

Read 1 John 5:10 and make notes:

As Real Christians – we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. We agree that this is the truth. We know in ourselves that it is true. God's Spirit is in us. He is the witness to us of the truth. We have an inner certainty that Jesus is the Son of God. We believe what God has said about him. We know that it is right to believe in Jesus.

God has said that Jesus is the Christ. He also said that Jesus is the Son of God. People who deny Jesus have not believed God's words. They deny that Jesus is the Son of God. They do not agree that he is the Christ. So they behave as if God tells lies. They act as if God's words are untrue. They have refused to believe in God and in Christ.

To receive the Son is to receive the Father. To deny the Son is to deny the Father. Nobody can both accept God and deny his Son. It has already been established in this letter – that anyone who believes in their heart that Jesus is the Son of God – is saved – and they have God with them.

Verse 10 now states that anyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God – has the Spirit's testimony – or God's testimony in their heart. AND those who disagree with the testimony of God - are calling God a liar. There are a couple of rather important principles expressed in this verse:

1 – Those who are Christians receive this inner witness from the Holy Spirit – that Jesus is in fact the Son of God.

That makes it extremely difficult to convince a real Christian that Jesus is not God. Their personal experience of being baptized with Jesus – and their personal experience of dying with Jesus – and their personal experience of being raised to new life with Jesus – and the witness that they have received personally – Might make them look bull-headed, or closed minded, or just plain stubborn – but they are just at peace and unmovable from that position – because of what they know.

.2 – Those who reject the testimony that Jesus is the Son of God – stand self-condemned – and in fact call God a liar by this position they have taken.

It is simply inconsistent to say that I profess belief in God and then to disbelieve what God has said in His Word. The loose translation of this position is to say, “Oh yeah, I believe in God, and I believe God is a liar.” To believe in God and to believe what God has said, especially about Jesus being God’s Son, is inseparably joined in those who are saved – And typically absent in those who are lost.

Read 1 John 5:11 and make notes:

Do you remember what was said about – what we know is tied to our experience? God gives us eternal life, because of Jesus. This is the effect of what God has said. Jesus has eternal life. This eternal life is in the Lord Jesus. He has shown it to us.

As we receive Jesus Christ, God gives us this eternal life. It is the gift of God by his Son Jesus. Eternal life is life now with God and it is life that will never end. Those who have eternal life will live with God always. They may die a physical death - but their spirit will never die.

1 John - 32 – God's Testimony

Christ came so that we would have this eternal life. We receive it when we trust in him. This is the new birth. We are born of God when we become Christians. And this is the sum of that testimony, God has given us a title to, and the real beginning of, eternal life; and this is purchased by, and treasured up in, his Son.

The question of whether we accept God's testimony or reject God's testimony is more than a mere academic question. Our answer to this question determines whether we have real life – that is to participate in eternal life – or that we do not.

God has given eternal life to mankind and the only way we get access to this eternal life - the only way we get to participate in this eternal life- is to accept Jesus as being God's Son.

Read 1 John 5:12 and make notes:

When we trust Jesus, we receive eternal life. To have the Son is to be in a living unity with him. Where such unity exists, this life exists. Those who believe in the Son - have eternal life. Those who do not have this unity - do not have the life. Only in Christ can we find eternal life. Those who do not have the Son of God cannot receive that life.

It plainly follows, he that has the Son - Living and reigning in him by faith - Has this life; and he that does not have the Son of God, does not have this life. We can claim to believe in God – claim to have God present with us – we can claim to have been endowed with special spiritual power, gifts, and ministry. But it boils down to a real clear distinction – those who have Jesus as the Son of God has this eternal life. And those who, while they may accept Jesus, but do not accept Jesus as the Son of God, they simply do not have this eternal life.

1 John - 32 – God's Testimony

With the many long and complicated discussions and debates of the nature of faith - it is here, in this simple letter of the New Testament, that we find a significant and practical conclusion to it. What ever else we may claim to have – what ever it may be that we believe are even so sure that we do have - Eternal life is not a reality apart from the belief and acceptance that Jesus is the Son of God.

We can accept many good things – and truthful things concerning Jesus – but if we reject the testimony that Jesus is the Son of God – then we do not have eternal life. To believe anything less that it was Jesus, the Son of God, who died for our sins – is to cut ourselves off from the life God gives. Regardless of how much a person might testify to having life from God - Regardless of how much a person might protest against the accusation - without the acceptance that Jesus is God's Son – we have no eternal life. The life that God gives is available through no other means than through His Son dying in our place. This is in fact what Jesus said about himself during his earthly ministry

Read John 14:6 and make notes:

Read 1 John 5:13 and make notes:

We can be confident that we have eternal life. As the Holy Spirit brings John to the end of his letter. He gives his purpose for all that he has written so far. He wants all the Christians to be sure about life. They have the true life in Christ. He feels that they lack confidence about this. He wants them to know that they do have eternal life. He wants to increase their trust and confidence in Christ.

Eternal life is not just a future life that has no end. It is life of a better quality, which we can live right now. We are sharing in the life of Christ. To believe in the name means to trust the person. It means to trust Jesus who is the Son of God.

In the closing of this letter, “I write these things”- that you may know. So we can know with a fuller and stronger assurance, that we have eternal life. The scope and sum of this whole paragraph appears from the conclusion of it; “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” So faith is the first and last point with John’s Gospel also. When John was being used by the Holy Spirit to write the Gospel of John, the purpose was expressed in Chp 20:

Read John 20:31 and make notes:

The Holy Spirit – and so did John – wanted people to not only Believe that Jesus was the Christ – but also to believe that Jesus was the Son of God – because by believing this was the way to receiving life in Jesus’ name. In this letter of 1st John, we find the Holy Spirit – as did John – wanted people to know how to tell if they had eternal life – or if they had believed a false teaching.

This letter was written to combat the false teachings – this letter was written to encourage the Real Christians – this letter was written to help the Christians distinguish between the real and the false.

There were so many false teaching being shared – so many different teachings about how to receive life from God. Some so legalistic that it would seem that very few could even hope to qualify. Some so open and flexible as to say that everyone makes it by the time the die. And a myriad of teachings in between.

God not only is not the author of confusion – but God does not like to see His Children struggling under the fog of confusion. So God sends us instructions and information, so that we can clear away the fog of false teachings - And that we can know beyond all doubt what is true.

The biggest reason so many of us feel uncertain about God's Word and uncertain about Spiritual things - is that we placed our faith in a person – or in the wrong thing. Sometimes that “wrong thing” was the church. And we were let down so painfully when that person or thing did not live up to our faith.

It is sad on the one hand, but it is very interesting on the other – that most of us when confronted with a choice – will believe Man's word over God's Word. When a person places their faith on themselves – they will never be sure where they stand with God. What happens to the person who has placed their faith in themselves – on good days they feel optimistic - on bad days they feel pessimistic. After a few experiences in both directions – they come to the point that they are not quite sure of anything – And that bleeds over to their relationship with God.

Dear friends, it is possible to “Know” we are saved. It is possible to “Know” we are forgiven. It is possible to “Know” we have eternal life. And God so much wants us to “Know” this to be true.

Some Church people will sing the song “On Christ The Solid Rock I Stand, All Other Ground Is Sinking Sand” – only because these are the words to the song – but it doesn't move them. That isn't really what's in their heart. But the person who has experienced Jesus personally - the person who has this inner witness of Jesus Christ in their Heart – that is a true and accurate statement of where they are – and how they start and finish each day of their life. Because of their personal experience with Jesus – They have the Testimony of God in their heart – They KNOW !

There is an old hymn that says, “Trust and Obey, for there is no other way – To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.” While today, I am so very convinced that this is true - it is also true that we can't get people to just blindly trust and obey. We must come to know something or someone – before we can trust.

1 John - 32 – God's Testimony

For a very long time now, the church in America has spent a lot of effort trying to get people to live according to Bible Standards. But it's hard to get people to obey when they don't trust. We really can't expect people to obey God when they don't trust God. And it is not likely we will get someone to trust God until they know God.

We simply must get back to the original message of the Gospel - We must get back to trying to get people to have a personal experience with Jesus - Instead of an experience with the church – or the organization – or the program. Only in a personal relationship with Jesus – will a person receive the Testimony of God in their Heart. And only then will they KNOW.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Most of us are aware that sometimes Christians ask for something in prayer – and they don't get what they ask for. If we have been a Christian for some time – we have probably had the experience for ourselves. We asked God for something – even prayed earnestly and maybe even passionately – but God did not give us what we asked for.

We see a lot of believers at one end or the other – of 2 extremes today. There is a large number of Christians who are at the extreme which says - “because we are a Christian – God is obligated to do whatever I ask in prayer.” And these people usually sound much more like they are giving Commands to God when they pray - rather than asking God for something.

However, the larger percentage of Believers are at the other end of extreme. These believers will ask for something in prayer - and then go about their life with the attitude that they probably won't get what they have asked for. There is a small percentage spread throughout – between these two extremes. This brings us to the text for this lesson:

Read 1 John 5:14 and make notes:

The Holy Spirit, through John, has already told us – we Christians have confidence that when we come before God, we receive anything we ask of him - because we obey His commands and do what pleases him (1 John 3:21-22). Now He is telling us that when we ask anything of God – according to His will – He hears us! And if you do a word study, it shows us that this means “He listens favorably”. This is a significant thing here.

Many of us have had the experience of having “Heard Something” but was unable to identify it. Perhaps we “heard” someone speaking, but we could not understand what they said. Many of us have “heard” someone speak, but we did not listen carefully because we did not like what they were saying.

We are told that Christians can have “confidence” when we ask something of God – and we are asking according to His will – that God is not only aware that we are saying something – but He in fact listens favorably to what we are asking! This isn't a new teaching or concept – in the Gospel of John – Jesus said, “if you remain in me and my words remain in your, ask whatever you wish and it will be given to you” (John 15:7).

Here in this little letter of 1st John – while we are being given a reason that we can have confidence when we pray – it is important to keep this assurance in context with the other Scriptures.

Christians who are remaining in Jesus – and allow God's Word to remain in them – and ask according to God's Will – can be confident that God will listen favorably when we ask Him for something – and we can be confident that He will answer our prayer.

Some tend to take this text and turn it into part of their legalistic religious approach to life. They present this as supporting the idea that the only time we get our prayers answered is when we pray the right way. So, if we don't learn the right way to pray – or if we don't pray in just the right way – then God isn't going to hear our prayer - or answer it.

Over the years, these people have developed a system of prayer where everything has to be said in just a certain way - and some declare we have to wear a certain kind of clothing – while others have insisted that we can only pray in a certain language. There are many variations today of the “only right way to pray” doctrines.

It was never about the “right way” to pray – but it was about praying according to God's will more so than according to our will. There are many “ways” to pray that are all acceptable to our Heavenly Father.

I am convinced that it doesn't matter what kind of clothing we wear when we pray to God – or if we pray without any clothing at all. I do recommend that if you decide to pray without clothing – that it would be best to do that in a very private place – rather than a public place. And the reason has nothing to do with God hearing the pray – but a lot to do with the nature of mankind that lives around us.

Some of the “legalist” have concluded that we must only ask for the things that God wants us to ask for. They have turned this text to say, “praying according to God's Will” means “asking for the things God wants us to ask for.” If we ask for things that God did not want us to ask for – then He stops listening. For some in this camp – praying becomes something like a game of hide and seek – Or perhaps like the game of “marco - polo” - since most of us aren't quite sure what “things” are on God's approved list and what things didn't make the list. They just go about asking for things – if they get it - they put that down as on the “approved list” – and if they don't get it - they conclude that this isn't on the approved list.

One of the big problems this doctrinal view has – if there is such a list of things that are approved to ask for – wouldn't it make sense that there might be a different approved list for different people? So the things that are acceptable for “you” to ask for – might not be on “my” approved list! Again, praying according to God's will is not about the specific thing – it is about the purpose and the intent of our heart.

We can be confident that God hears our prayers. As a Christian, we already know that we have eternal life. So, we can be confident when we come to God. We are able to approach God in prayer. We can be sure that God will hear our prayers. And we - Who believe- Have this further confidence in him, that he hears us - That is, God listens favorably to whatever prayer we offer in faith.

Read 1 John 5:15 and make notes:

This verse is kind of like “underlining” a statement - “if we know that God hears our prayers” – “that is all of our prayers – whatever we ask for” – “then we can be assured that we receive what we ask for.” If we know that God hears us when we pray – then we can be sure that we have the things we ask for. This sounds very similar to what Jesus said, “whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours” (Mark 11:24).

This kind of confidence is lacking in so many Christians today. A great majority of believers today, will ask for something in prayer - and then be quick to tell you that they “hope” they receive the answer.

God answers prayer. We can ask God for anything. We know that God hears us. He listens favorably to our prayers. We can be certain about this. If God hears us, he will answer our prayers. He may not answer at once. But we can be sure that the answer will come.

We need to know what agrees with God’s plan. Then when we can ask for it. And we can be sure that God will answer us. Jesus said, ‘Whatever you ask in prayer, believe. Believe that you have received it. And it will be yours’ (Mark 11:24).

Do you remember in the opening comments of today’s lesson – I mentioned that many Christians have had the experience of asking God for something – and didn’t get it? Jesus had that experience while He was in His earthly ministry.

I don’t know if you have ever thought of it this way – but Jesus asked God for something – he even asked for it with such passion that it caused his blood to ooze out through the pores of his skin – and God did not give it to him. It wasn’t that Jesus didn’t remain in the Father – and it wasn’t that Jesus had not allowed the Word of God to remain in him – But what he was asking - was NOT according to God’s will. And after praying with such passion and intensity – as if Jesus sensed God’s Will was different from His personal request – Jesus ended his prayerful plea with “yet, not my will, but your will be done”.

Many have preached this particular statement on Jesus’ part – to emphasize the great level of obedience Jesus had toward His Heavenly Father. And I will agree that Jesus was very obedient.

But this is more than just a high level of obedience on Jesus' part. I'll explain that statement in a moment.

Sometimes we don't know God's will for the person we are praying for - and sometimes, even when we are praying for ourselves. Sometimes we want something so badly that it hurts us to think we won't get it. Sometimes we are sure that we will die if we don't get what we are asking for. So in either of these cases, we pray so earnestly – and oh so passionately – and yet, if it does not line up with God's will. We don't get what we have asked for.

There are those who teach that it doesn't matter what we pray for – that God's Will is going to be done – regardless! They teach that the things of this world and the events of this world are going to unfold according to God's divine plan and will – so what we do – and say – simply doesn't matter. These are usually the people who tell us not to bother voting for or against anyone or any law. There are so many Scriptures that prove this concept is false!

On the most simple level – the Bible tells us that it is God's Will that no one perish – it is God's Will that everyone be saved. And yet the Bible also tells us that Most people will be lost and go to hell – while so very few will be saved and spend eternity with God in Heaven. So, God doesn't always get His Will.

He is powerful enough to make it happen that He would always get His Will – but God is loving enough to allow us to have the freedom to choose. This is one of the many character traits of God that seem so foreign to mankind. It is fairly common that a person will want a particular thing – or maybe another person. And then they find out they are not going to be allowed to have that thing or person that they want. This person then decides to destroy that thing – or the other person – with the mentality that if “I can't have it, then nobody will”.

And yet here is God, who has the power and the authority to make everything come out according to His desires - and He Loves Us so much that He will allow us to choose – even if it means He doesn't get what He so passionately wants Himself.

When Jesus made that statement in the Garden of Gethsemane – that he will accept God’s will over the passionate desire of his own heart – He was in fact exhibiting part of the character of God - the loving character that says, “I love you enough that I will give up what I want so badly, in order to allow you to have what you want.”

This makes it important that when we pray and say the words “never-the-less, your will be done” – that these are not just words that we say because we have been trained to pray this way. It is important that this be the willful loving intent of our heart.

The words have no magic – but when these words flow out of a heart of loving God enough to give up our desires in order for Him to have what he wants – Then these words have great power.

What a radical idea! That I would love someone enough that even though I can hardly sit still waiting for my favorite show to come on - that I would allow this other person to watch a program they want to see – even though it means I will not get to see what I want to see.

What a radical idea! That I would love someone enough to give up eating what I really love to eat – in order to allow this other person to eat what they want to eat.

What a radical idea! That I would give up – or miss out on – this thing I desire with all my being to do – or to experience - just so that I can give God what He wants. And that I would do so and be happy about it!

This does seem radical in today’s culture. For it is so common place that people will only get involved in ministry activities – if it doesn’t interfere with their hobbies – their children’s activities – or perhaps their Sunday morning ritual of “sleeping in”- or if it doesn’t interfere with the “game”.

It does seem to go against the normal flow in our culture to even ask someone to consider doing what God wants instead of what “we” want. The few who will acknowledge it as a proper thing to do – usually admit it as only appropriate in days of old. But I am declaring to you - it is still a very contemporary and working concept.

Many of us have seen the movie “Chariots of Fire” – a story about two real life persons. One of those was a man named Eric Liddell – he was a runner – he was faster than most. On his way to the summer Olympics he was informed that one of the races he was to compete in was going to be held on Sunday. Eric was expected by many, and was hoping personally, to win a gold medal in that event. But Eric wanted to honor God more than he wanted to win a personal trophy – so he refused to compete on Sunday.

A man named Truett Cathy, began a business selling Chicken sandwiches. They were becoming very popular – and he began to open additional restaurants. Truett wanted to open restaurants in some of the shopping malls and the malls wanted Truett's chicken sandwiches sold in their malls. But the malls insisted that all the food selling operations had to be open on Sundays for their customers. Truett decided that he wanted to honor God more than he wanted to make more money, so he refused to open restaurants in shopping malls. And let me point out that just in case you haven't noticed - Chick-Fil-A is quite a successful business today.

We can't go wrong when we want the things that bring honor and glory to God - instead of honor and glory to us. We can't go wrong when we want the things that bring pleasure to God - instead of pleasure to us.

Asking according to God's Will – is not a matter of asking for the things God has already decided He wants us to ask for. It is a matter of asking for things that line up with God's Will.

God desires everyone would be saved, but God's Will is to allow each person to choose. When I pray for another person – am I praying for that person to be forced to Get Saved - Or am I praying that they have a clear choice, that they clearly understand the consequences of their decision. Am I praying that they come into contact with those who will clearly preach the Word - instead of praying that God put his knee across their neck and hold them down until they agree to get saved?

And which one these - is more in line with God's Will? When I pray for God to allow me to have something - am I praying for this thing – so that I can feel important – or look important? Am I praying for this thing – because it will bring me pleasure – even though it will bring others discomfort? Or am I praying for this thing because I can see how it will help me be better able to do what God wants me to do.

Which way is more in line with God's Will? One person prays and asks God to make them very prosperous in worldly goods – because they like to have a lot of worldly goods – or maybe they like the idea of being rich. Another person prays and asks God for pretty much the same worldly goods – because they want to be able to help more people and to do more to bring honor to God.

Which of these are praying in line with God's Will?

Jeremiah, many years ago, came to understand that God didn't want to control our lives. But God did desire to direct our steps, "it is not for man to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). And then we connect this with Proverbs 16:

Read Proverbs 16:9 and make notes:

1 John - 33 – God's Will

God loves us so much that He will allow us to choose the course for our life. God is pleased with us choosing to be a farmer, mechanic, medical doctor, sales representative, or homemaker. But once we have chosen a direction in which we wish to go - God wants to direct our steps along that chosen path.

God is just as pleased when we select a green car as when we select a red car -when we select beef as when we select chicken - when we select this brand as when we select that brand - as long as it is within our budget. Then once we have made our choice – let's look to God to direct our steps along that path.

This approach has so much more to do with praying “according to God’s Will” - than the language we speak – or the clothes we wear – or whether we sit, stand, or lie down.

If we could just get more Christians to pray in this manner – We would see revival take place in the hearts of the Christians. And then we would see revival in our community.

“Lord, I want to receive this – I want to do this”- “but if this will interfere with what you want me to do – I will gladly let it go” - “because I want to please you more than I want to please me – or my spouse – or my children – or my neighbor.”

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

In the previous lesson, the Holy Spirit speaking through John, pointed out one of the more important benefits of being a true Christian – “assurance of our prayers being answered.” Some Bible Scholars teach that the following verses are nothing but an example of such a praying with assurance.

However, as we read the following verses, it’s really hard to imagine someone calling this an example of praying with assurance. It is clearly a continuing of the teaching to help Believers guard against the false teachers. In fact, it seems obvious that everything that has been taught in this letter so far, is actually leading up to the point that is being made here – and this may in fact be the main point of the whole letter – if there is just one main point.

From the beginning of this letter – there has been a constant warning against Believers falling into sin. There has been this continual stressing that sin is characteristic of those who are not really born of God. Over and over, the lines have been clearly drawn between those who are true believers and those who are false believers. And now, after having assured the readers of how they can tell if they are children of God - the question of sin is brought up again.

Just an interesting side note before we get into the message: The N.T. tells us that we should pray for those who persecute us – to pray for those who despitefully use us - and yet we are also told that there is some sin that if a person commits that sin - we should not pray for them.

We might wonder, how could anything be more offensive – than when someone attacks me personally? And yet, when someone intentionally persecutes us – the instruction is clear and simple – Pray for them. However, there is a sin, for which we should not pray for the person when they have committed that sin.

Read 1 John 5:16-17 and make notes:

A situation is spoken of in which a church member sees another member committing a “sin that does not lead to death.” When this is the case, we are told that we should pray for them. And the emphasis seems to be that the possibility of having this prayer answered on the behalf of the sinning person – applies only in the situation where the sin is one that does not lead to death.

This letter, we call 1st John, points out that there is a “sin that leads to death”. And when a person commits “a sin that leads to death” – then we are not to offer any prayers of intercession on their behalf. Since the specific sin that leads to death is not identified in this letter – it is reasonable to assume that the original readers of this letter would know or understand to what this is referring.

If we believe some commentators on this letter – we are left with the idea that “John wrote the letter” – and the original readers understood John – but as for us – the modern readers – we don’t know John and so we don’t just automatically understand what he is referring to.

Here is one of those places where I will openly disagree with some very respectable commentators. I believe that the Holy Spirit is the author of the letter – he only used John to put it into written form. The Holy Spirit not only wanted those believers in the first century to read and to know the things in this letter – the Holy Spirit wants every reader from that time until Jesus comes back to know the things in this letter.

In light of this view – I have to believe that we are just as capable of understanding the letter today – as the first readers were. And they may have wondered exactly what was meant by this as much as we do. If we approach this letter with a predominantly Jewish mindset – it would be natural to interpret this part of the letter as referring to physical death. In a number of Jewish writings, there are references to sins, which when committed, call for the person to be put to death, physically. So this view would say that if a person commits a sin that calls for the death penalty, don’t pray for them.

I believe this view is out of sync with God's view. Consider the criminals who were being executed at the same time as Jesus. They had committed a sin that called for the death penalty – and they were in the process of being executed. And when Jesus saw the true repentant heart of one of these sinners – Jesus, not only accepted him, but Jesus spoke words of assurance and comfort to this condemned criminal. If we hold this view, then we would have to say that was only a one time thing and today, we are not to intercede for anyone who has received the death penalty.

There are a number of Scholars who teach that this is referring to those who reject Jesus as Savior. The rationale is that rejecting Jesus is the sin that leads to eternal death – so we are not to intercede for anyone who rejects the invitation of Jesus to be saved. I don't believe I need to offer a lot of rebuttal to this viewpoint. Just go ahead and try to convince a Godly mother to stop praying for her lost children! I felt the tug of God upon my heart a few times before I said yes to Jesus. And I don't hesitate to say, "I am grateful that my grandmother did not stop praying for me to be saved."

Others have taken the view that this is referring to sins that were committed willfully and intentionally. The idea is that unintentional sins – or sins that we did not understand were sins when we committed them are not sins that lead to death. And the sins where we knew it was wrong, but did it anyway, are the ones that lead to death. If this were the correct interpretation – I'm reasonably sure that not one of us would make it. Is there one of us, who has been saved more than just a short time – who has not intentionally done something that we knew was wrong – but did it anyway? I don't know one!

Yes, the true Christian is convicted in their heart right away – and we repent. What a doomed bunch of creatures we would be if this were the correct interpretation. If this one was right – there really wouldn't be any use in Jesus having come and paid the penalty for our sins. If this one was right – there really wouldn't be any purpose in God having given us the Bible except to let us all know just how doomed we are.

I am convinced that the only reason this issue is confusing to anyone today – is the same reason it was confusing to some in that day. The presence of false teachers and the false versions of the Gospel they teach. If it were not for the many false teachings today – Believers wouldn't struggle with this issue. If we had no false teachings today – Believers would remember that Jesus has told us that the only “unforgivable sin” is Blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Every other sin on this earth – as horrible – as disgusting – as reprehensible as many of them are – they can be forgiven.

As soon as the sinner repents – they are forgiven for every kind of sin - except when a person Blasphemes the Holy Spirit. Since this one sin is not eligible for forgiveness – then it is the “sin that leads to death” - because there will be no sinners in Heaven. Every other sin, once forgiven, no longer is on our record, and as such does not lead to death. Whatever the sin we find another brother or sister having committed – let us intercede for them – maybe even go and talk with them – but let us do whatever we do in an effort to help them be forgiven and restored to fellowship with God. Only if we find someone has “Blasphemed the Holy Spirit” – should we refrain from praying for them.

Read 1 John 5:18 and make notes:

“The one who was born of God” - There are some translations of the Bible where this verse causes some to think this is referring to the “Believer.” That would make the “Believer” to be the one who keeps himself safe. I don't know how many of you have made this discovery - but I have long ago discovered that - “I” cannot keep “myself” safe. If “I” were “my” only means of protection and help – Oh, how doomed I would be.

“The one who was born of God” is referring to Jesus. Back in verse 13 – we were told that these things were written that we “may know”. In a series of affirmations, this letter has declared the content of the things that every Christian should “know.” It may be worth noting at this point – the Greek word used - expresses the “state of knowledge” - rather than the “act of acquiring knowledge.” This would mean that the letter was more about helping the Believer to recognize what they know - more so than giving them knowledge which they lacked.

We are told that anyone who is born of God does not continue sinning. This follows the statement about interceding and praying for the person we find in sin. This should be one of those “light bulb” moments: If we are a Believer – and we have brothers and sisters interceding and praying for us and we have Jesus keeping us safe – that’s how it is true that a Believer does not continue to sin.

Oh sure, any one of us can fall down – we can slip up – especially in the early days of our Christian walk. But being surrounded with people who love us and care about us enough to lift us up in prayer – along with Jesus’ watchful eye – we can fall and sin – but, We simply can’t remain in a sinful lifestyle.

God will help Christians not to sin. Those who have been born of God are Christians. Those who become Christians must stop sinning. They will not continue to sin as they did in the past. This is the test of the truth in them. They hate sin and they try to please God. It is not that they never fail. But they will not sin as a manner of lifestyle

Jesus the Son of God looks after his children. He will keep us safe and protect us from the devil. He will not allow Satan to damage us. He will not let Satan gain control over us. He will not let Satan lead us back into sin.

A little practical discussion on this matter:

Years ago, there were a number of churches, which practiced a type of praying for Believers who were sinning. These churches would hold a weekly prayer meeting where individuals were named, the sin they were involved in was identified, and the whole group at the prayer meeting prayed earnestly for that person to repent – and to be forgiven. It is extremely hard to find this practice in any church in our country today. Even in those churches where this practice was so prevalent just a generation ago, they no longer practice this.

While the original intent was no doubt good and sincere – this practice was to the gossip what sugar water is to a fly. The gossips could not stay away from such meetings – and then the gossip could not keep the confidence of what they had learned – and the info was shared publicly. That's a major reason why I stop someone when they start asking for too many details when asked to pray for someone. The person asking may be a gossip – and they for sure don't need details. Even if the person asking is not a gossip – there may be a gossip listening and taking notes. Many wayward believers became so publicly shamed that they were driven away from the church - instead of being restored.

The Bible is such a good instruction manual – if only we would read it, digest it, and put it to use. The Word of God instructs us to go to a Believer in private when we find they are in sin. We are to try to restore them – to encourage them – and to be a crutch and help them find their way back into full fellowship with God.

We are NEVER to look the other way! God's Word also tells us that Love covers a multitude of sin rather than revealing it. Only after we discover that we are unable to get this person to return to righteous living, do we involve others. And even then, we are to be discreet and make sure that the others we involve are mature and can keep things confidential. And the last resort is to have this person revealed publicly – and even that is to be done in a manner that provides a means of restoration – Never for the purpose of shaming or condemning.

We should pray for them, when another Christian sins. Christians are not perfect and they do sin. When we see a Christian sin, we should pray about it. We have a duty in love to look after such a person. It should be our natural reaction to pray. This is for sins that do not lead to death. The promise is that God will answer the prayer. He will give life to the person who has sinned. He will forgive the sin.

There is a part of death in all sin. Sin in a Christian breaks the unity with the Lord. That person needs God to forgive the sin. Then the unity with the Lord will return. When a person blasphemes the Holy Spirit – such a person refuses to believe what they know to be true. We are not advised to pray for those who do this sin. Such prayer will not have good results.

All wrong thoughts and actions are sin. Some sin leads to death and some do not lead to death. All sins are serious. We must not think that some are not bad.

As a Christian – we should strive to walk in righteousness. It should be our goal to live our life without committing a single sin. But we can live out our life with great confidence that even if we do fall. The devil cannot keep us in that sin – because we are surrounded by such a prayerful bunch of helpers.

Because we have Jesus watching over us - and we have other Believers praying for us:

We will overcome every sinful temptation

We will overcome every weakness

We will overcome every trick and trap

We will overcome every false teaching

We will live victoriously in Jesus Christ !

This is the way it is meant to be by our Heavenly Father. And this is the way it can be - if only the Church will be obedient to this instruction. And when we get serious about this issue - we will see revival break out in our community.

1 John - 34 – Pray For Sinners

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

We have come to the close of this simple letter of 1st John. I trust you have found the powerful truths of the Gospel the Holy Spirit has scattered throughout this letter.

In this lesson, as we look at the closing statements - it doesn't sign off with a few soft lines of "I love you", or "Sincerely" – But closes with something of a bang.

Read 1 John 5:19 and make notes:

This simple declaration, made by the Holy Spirit through John – reminds Believers that the whole of mankind is divided into 2 camps: Those who belong to God and those who belong to the evil one.

Consider the phrase: "the whole world is under the control of the evil one." In checking the writings of the early church Fathers, it seem unanimous – they all believed this text did not mean the physical earth – but it referred to the people. None of the early church writings that I found thought the dirt and rocks, or the oceans and rivers and lakes, or the weather, or any other part of this physical world belong to the evil one. All of them said that this phrase in this letter of 1st John was speaking about the people who belong to this world.

Previously in V18, the declaration was in a more general sense – it spoke of anyone who is born of God – but here in V19, the declaration is more personal – it says "we"are children of God. This conveyed to those first readers that "me and the apostle John are in this together" - "We are children of God" – so "We can claim the promises made to those born of God." AND, those holding onto the world are under the power of the evil one – and they cannot share in the promises of God.

God is the origin of the new life that we have. We were born of God when we first trusted Jesus Christ. We know that we belong to him. We are now the children of God. The whole world is under the control of the devil.

The world includes all those people who do not know God. The world means everything that opposes God. And the world includes all God's enemies. Satan has power in this world, but not all of the power – not even the most power.

Read 1 John 5:20 and make notes:

Since all of mankind is divided into 2 camps – how is it possible for a person to find their way from one camp to the other? How could the Church ever come into existence in a world that is under the control of Satan?

This declaration provides the answer: God's Son, that is Jesus Christ, came into this world that is being controlled by the evil one. Jesus, when he came, brought understanding of the Truth – so that we could know the One who is Truth.

Most people in our nation have heard that Jesus came to pay a penalty on our behalf. Even those who do not believe in Jesus as being real – or those who do not believe Jesus is the only means of salvation have heard this. But most of them do not know that One of the reasons Jesus came was to bring understanding of the Truth.

Jesus came to a world that was being ruled by an evil force – being ruled by means of keeping people in confusion about a great many things- being ruled by means of keeping people so confused that they were all walking around saying “what is truth” or “can anyone know what is true”? Into this situation, Jesus comes and brings understanding of the Truth!

I don't want to take anything away from Jesus having paid the penalty for my sins. I can't imagine that I could praise Him enough for doing that. But wouldn't it be sad, if our penalty was paid, we no longer will be doomed to hell forever and ever – but we still lived in confusion – wouldn't that be tragic? Not only did Jesus come to save us from the one holding us hostage – Jesus brought Understanding to give to each one that answers His invitation to be saved.

The Gnostics taught that Son of God only seemed to unite with the man Jesus. They taught that the need for man to be saved was to gain knowledge – so there was no need what-so-ever for anyone to die an atonement death.

This letter has in more than one place emphasized that Jesus – the Son of God – died for our sins. Back in Chapter 2 of this letter, we were told that one cannot have God the Father, unless one has God the Son.

We have religions today who try to acknowledge Jesus and deny the Heavenly Father. We have others who acknowledge the Heavenly Father and deny Jesus the Son. Over and over in this simple letter, the point is hammered – Jesus is the True God and eternal life is only found in Him.

We know that Jesus, the Son of God, has come to this earth. He came from God and he became a man. He came in the past but he is still present. He lives with and in his people. The Son of God has made us able to understand the truth. We can know God when we trust in Jesus. We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Now we can know God by experience because he is the true God. He is the genuine God, unlike all false gods. Our God is the only real God.

We live in unity with God the Father, with Jesus the Son, and with the Holy Spirit. We live in God because we belong to his Son Jesus Christ. To know him is to have eternal life. That life is in him. Jesus said, 'this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God. And that they may know Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (John 17:3).

And we know - By all these infallible proofs. That the Son of God is come - Into the world. And he has given us a spiritual understanding, that we may know him, the true one - "The faithful and true witness." And we are in the true one - As branches in the vine, even in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. This Jesus is the only living and true God, together with the father and the Spirit, and the original fountain of eternal life.

Read 1 John 5:21 and make notes:

What an abrupt way to end a letter! - “keep yourselves from idols – period” – bam! Those first readers of this letter were living in a world - where the worship of images and false gods was everywhere and was common place.

If we believe what was said in this letter before we got to this verse – Then this verse is of utmost importance. If Jesus is the True God and if salvation is found only in Jesus Christ - It has to be very important that we keep ourselves from idols. It has to be very very important that we keep ourselves away from anything or anyone that will lead us away from God.

Christians – keep yourselves from idols! Anything that takes the place of God is a false god. Christians must guard themselves from such false gods. So many things would tempt us away from the real God.

The false teachers tried to do this by their wrong ideas about the Christ. We need to be careful that we remain in the Lord. Keep yourselves from idols – Keep yourselves from all worship of false gods, and the worship of images, and of any creature, and from every inward idol; - keep yourselves from loving, desiring, fearing anything more than God.

All true happiness is found in the true God alone.

There are 3 things we should take home with us from this lesson:

[1] What does our Fruit Reveal about us?

We know that we are children of God by the witness and the fruit of his Spirit (1John 3:24). But the whole world - All who do not have God's Spirit - have idolatry, fraud, violence lasciviousness, impiety, all manner of wickedness.

In this short expression the horrible state of the world is painted in the most vivid colors - whether we have God's Spirit - whether we have accepted Understanding from Him- is revealed in our comments, our conversations, - in the actions, contracts, quarrels, - and the kinds of friendships we have with worldly men.

Our Fruit reveals our reality – Regardless of what our confession says.

[2] Are We Seeking God's Understanding?

If twisted just a little, this message could play into the hands of those who were following the way of Gnosticism. The Gnostics were gaining many followers in John's day. The Gnostics were telling people that the way of salvation was found in Knowledge.

Ignorance – and simply not knowing – was the means of destruction. But Knowledge – and learning – was the means of salvation. The Holy Spirit, speaking through John, did not say that Jesus came to bring knowledge. He said Jesus came and brought Understanding.

We mentioned in an earlier lesson – how useless knowledge is – when we don't understand what we know. Jesus doesn't simply want Believers to “know” a lot of the Bible. Jesus wants us to Understand HIM! We will gain that understanding of Jesus by reading and knowing the Word of God. But the ultimate goal is for us to Understand Jesus, so that we can follow in His Way.

It is good to gain knowledge. But knowledge by itself is not all good. We must have understanding in order to benefit from our knowledge.

Christianity has the benefit of Divine Revelation to help us Understand the things we come to Know about God's Word – and about God. When Jesus said that Peter didn't come to know the things he said by the knowledge of man, but that God have revealed them to him - Jesus then declared that upon "this rock" I will build my church. I am convinced that Jesus was referring to the "rock" of Divine Revelation. How can any man find the way to God, unless God provides Divine Revelation on how to do this?

[3] Stay Away From Idols

Idols – sometimes it is an actual material object shaped to represent a deity. Idols – sometimes it is a person – either living or dead – that we desire to be just like them. Idols – sometimes it is a cause or purpose for which we willingly give all our time an energy to it. Idols – sometimes it is a worldly object of some kind – that in and of itself is not evil or even anti-God – but we give it first place in our lives and it becomes more important to us than God. Idols – sometimes it is us! – we become the most important thing in our life – everyone else is of less importance than me – even God.

How can we tell if something has become an idol – or is becoming an idol to us? Its fairly easy to determine – let me explain:

When someone or something else comes along and distracts us from this thing or activity - how mad do we get?

If someone interrupts our TV program – and we get really angry about it – then this TV program is more important to us than this person.

If someone interrupts our participation in some activity – and we get seriously mad – then this activity is more important to us than this person.

If the requirements of one activity interferes with the requirements of another activity – and we come unglued – then the first activity is more important than the second. Whatever it is – or whoever it is – that we most want to spend time with – then this person or thing is taking a place of importance in our life. The more of a place of importance this person or thing takes – the more we will resent and resist allowing anyone or anything to interfere with our time with this or them. And when the time comes that we simply will not allow anyone else or anything else to interfere with our time with this thing or person – Now we know we have made this our God – and if it ain't Jesus – it's an idol.

This is why it is easy for some people to never miss an opportunity to serve God – whether that is attending church services or reaching out to others. For the person who has made Jesus their God - no one else can keep them away. And no other activity can keep them away.

But when attending church – or serving God – is seen as interfering with something else we want to do - or interfering with us spending time with someone else - then that activity or that person has become an idol in our life.

Will you please hear this as a loving concerned warning - Please Don't Allow Any Idols To Come Into Your Life! Make Jesus number one!

There are so many wonderful promises from God to those who love Him. And allowing an idol to come between us and God – causes us to lose the promises of God.

I suspect some will be mad at me for even suggesting that God, and serving God, and attending church, should be more important than the activities of this world. But I love you enough – and I want so much for every one of you to receive all of the promises of God - that I cannot withhold this from you.

What does my fruit reveal? Am I seeking God's Understanding? Am I making an effort to keep idols out of my life?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group: