

1 John 5:1-6
2nd Sunday of Easter
April 11, 2010

1 John 5:1-6 (New International Version)

Faith in the Son of God

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. ²This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. ³This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, ⁴for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

⁶This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

1 John 5:1-6 LOVE BEARS WITNESS TO THE TRUTH!

Flowers are a sure sign of spring. The green top-leaves of the tulip, daffodils, and crocuses are making their perennial appearance reminding us that spring has once again arrived. The ever-increasing amount of daylight reminds us that summer is just around the corner. But, before we know it, the daylight will begin decreasing around the middle of June. The air will begin to cool, the leaves will slowly change, and fall will be with us once again. These signs bear witness that God continues to keep his promise to bless us with season after beautiful season. Without a doubt, these things will continue to pass until the last day. As the spring flowers bear witness to God's continued blessings, so today's lesson from 1 John bears witness to the truth.

Satan had opened an all-out assault on the holy Christian Church. False teachers had arisen from within and without who promoted a theology of doubt. These false teachers posed questions like the following: Is the Holy Bible complete? Was Jesus really the promised Christ? Does it really matter how you live, and is there much difference between good and evil?

Doubt was creeping into the minds of Christians. Believers were losing their confidence in the Bible. Doubt topples faith. If there is no confidence to be had in the Bible, then is Jesus really the Savior? If there is no Savior, there is no salvation. Is there any truth at all?

The apostle John's first epistle is a resounding YES! With this letter, he lovingly rebukes the doubting Christian in order to bring people back into a stronger relationship with the true, living God – God who is light...truth...love. In fact love is the theme. Love is who God is. Love is what we are called to as Christians. Love bears witness to the truth!

John begins by making a connection between God, faith, and love. He writes, *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.* ² *This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.* ³ *This is love for God: to obey his commands.* Anyone who possesses the knowledge that Jesus is the promised Messiah has the confidence to know beyond all doubt that he has been reborn from the darkness of sin and unbelief by the power of God himself.

Love bears witness to the truth of that relationship. Love moved God to promise the Christ to save the world. Love moved God to choose you to believe that truth. God empowers you and me with the desire to bear witness to our relationship to him through love – both in return to him and toward one another. Simply put, we willingly live obediently to him through his ten commandments. Faith and love are inseparable.

This is not a bad thing. God's love transforms our way-of-thinking. Whereas the sinful nature views obedience to God as an inconvenient burden, the new creation in the Christian sees things differently. John reminds us, *And his commands are not burdensome,*

Do you see how things have changed for you and me with regard to our relationship to God's Ten Commandments. To the sinful, unbelieving person, God's law is a burden. They are a burden to keep because they are contrary to the way our sinful nature wants to live. Loving God and glorifying him are not on the sinful nature's to-do list. The sinful nature glorifies itself not God. It lives to gratify the dark desires of sin.

That brings us face-to-face with an even greater burden with damning consequences. The eternal burden of sin is guilt, death, and damnation. Apart from the power of God and his love there is no keeping the commandments. There is no pleasing God. There is only death. This is a burden that meets us square in the eyes. This is the condition out of which you and I were called. That evil burden is the one you and I once bore. God unloaded that burden from you and me and placed it on the willing shoulders of Jesus Christ the Son of God. Love bears witness to this truth. God demonstrated his love for us by becoming the curse of sin for mankind. For us, the curse of sin was replaced with the victory of Christ on the cross and from the grave.

John writes of that victory, ***This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.*** Easter is the season of victory. Christ overcame the burden of the sins of all. His perfect life made up for our sinful ones. He offered up his blood and innocent death as the full-payment for guilt. Christ took back his life to witness to his victory. That was love-in-action! God's gift to you is the faith to believe this truth. God's gift to you is YOUR resurrection from the dead to life everlasting.

Christ's victory is your victory. Not only does God credit you with Jesus' victory and promise you all the eternal benefits that are attached to that victory, but he gives you a victory to live each and every day. John tells us that Christ's victory is also ours. ⁵ ***Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.***

What is this victory for you and me? It is the very same victory promised to the Christians under attack in John's day. We rejoice in the victory that is ours over sin and death through Christ. We stand firm under the attacks of Satan and every evil which seek to destroy faith. We live for God not for human philosophy or earthly gain. We endure pain and hardship – still rejoicing and not becoming bitter or despairing. We look forward to our own resurrection on the last day to glory everlasting.

God the Holy Spirit bears witness to him through whom all this is possible. ⁶ ***This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.***

God the Holy Spirit bears witness to this saving truth still to this day. The Holy Spirit has made this truth a part of your life. As it was in the days of John, so it still is true today. God the Holy Spirit bears witness to the truth through the means of grace.

Water, blood, and truth. These are the means by which the Holy Spirit makes known to us the truths of God. The Holy Spirit creates faith in the hearts of those conceived and born in sin through the saving water of baptism. The Holy Spirit sustains that faith through the body and blood of Christ which come to us in the Lord's Supper in which the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting are communicated to us directly from Christ. The sacraments confirm in a miraculous way the work of the truth, that is the Word of God. The sacraments make the Word yours in a very real and personal way.

There is no mistaking for whom it is that God's love and forgiveness are intended. It was over your head that baptism's waters poured. It is for your forgiveness that the body and blood of Christ enter your mouth. It is to you, personally, that Christ speaks through his Word of truth.

There is no room for doubt. There is only truth. Love bears witness to the truth. The Holy Spirit and the means of grace testify. This is your Easter victory!

Amen.