

FPFWC Christian Development



Faith Gives Us Hope

August 2021

Summer Quarter

August 21, 2021

Lesson #3 – A Conquering Faith

SCRIPTURE TEXT – 1 John 4:2-3,13-17; 5:4-5

ICE BREAKERS-

1. What are some ways to encourage a person of dead faith to embrace Christ anew?
2. How should God's love motivate you to love others?

Key Verse- God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.—1 John 4:16b

LESSON BACKGROUND –

Five of the books of the New Testament are attributed to the apostle John, one of the original 12 disciples (see Matthew 4:21–22; 10:1–4). His five books are the Gospel of John; the letters (also called epistles) that we designate as 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John; and the book of Revelation.

History strongly associates John in his later years with the church in Ephesus. Tradition says he died in the AD 90s. His three letters were probably written in the region of Ephesus for churches in the area, and thus would date from the AD 80s or 90s. John would have been an elderly man at that time. The dignity of his age peeks through in 1 John, where he addressed his readers as his “little children” numerous times.

The idea of overcoming, or being victorious, is a favorite theme of John's. In 1 John 2:13–14 he discussed victory over Satan. In 1 John 4–5, he wrote about overcoming the pressures of the world. As we consider this in today's study, we must be careful to distinguish among three ways the Bible speaks of “the world”:

- As planet Earth in its physical sense (examples: Acts 17:24; Romans 10:18)
- As the world's human inhabitants (examples: Luke 2:1; John 3:16)
- As a system of values opposed to God's (examples: John 14:17; Colossians 2:20)

In his first letter John wrote of Satan's system for opposing the work of God on earth (1 John 2:15–17). In this sense, a person of the world lives for the pleasures of the flesh, but a dedicated Christian lives for the joys of the Spirit.

When John wrote his first epistle, Christianity had existed for more than 50 years. His audience faced the pressures of heretical ideas and uncertainty about their salvation. The ideas that would become full-blown gnosticism in the second century AD were already threatening Christianity. One of gnosticism's heretical beliefs was that salvation came through knowledge (Greek: gnosis, from which we

have our word *diagnosis*). They also believed that Christ was a spirit who didn't exist in bodily form. The spiritual was viewed as always good, and the physical was viewed as always evil.

LESSON COMMENTARY

4:2–3. This gives one criterion, though not the *only* one, by which the church can recognize a divinely inspired teacher: He publicly acknowledges that the divine, heavenly **Christ** came **in the flesh** in the person of the earthly, human **Jesus** (v. 2). But **every spirit** leading a teacher who **does not** preach **Jesus** to be the heavenly incarnate Messiah **is not sent from God**. A teacher's denial of the doctrine of the incarnation is a sufficient enough test to know that he is not divinely inspired and does not preach the truth of God. Worse, **this is the very spirit** who will animate the future, personal antichrist. That spirit **now is already in the world** inspiring spurious teachers (v. 3). There is at work in the world a satanic parody of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus was present in body prior to His ascension, and then He sent the Holy Spirit. But the **spirit of the antichrist** is in the world now, to be followed by the physical presence of the antichrist later.

4:13–16. One way **we know that we abide in** a relationship with God is by **His Spirit**, whom **He has given us**. The Spirit fosters affection in us toward the brethren (v. 13). The Spirit stimulates our accepting by faith the apostolic testimony of the incarnation (v. 15). John and his apostolic associates **have seen** and testify **that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world** (v. 14). Given John's historical context in his battle against the Gnostic heretics, if someone denied that Jesus of Nazareth was God's Son, he was not saved. Conversely, anyone who **confesses that** the historical, earthly **Jesus is the heavenly Son of God** shows that **God abides in** relationship with **him, and he is in** a relationship with **God** (v. 15). By accepting the doctrine of the incarnation, John and other like-minded people **have come to know and have believed the love which God has for** them. Three evidences of being saved are mentioned here: (1) knowledge of the truth, (2) believing it, and (3) remaining **in** or displaying **love** to others (v. 16).

4. The Spiritual Development from Loving Believers (4:17–18)

4:17–18. A Christian's love should be **perfected** ("to overcome or supplant an imperfect state of things by one that is free [from] objection," BDAG, 996) (v. 17), i.e. gradually grow and show itself more and more toward others. A fully developing love gives reassurance to a believer that he or she is right with God, and will enable him to have confidence on the day of judgment. The believer does not dreadfully anticipate it. Nor will that day hold any terrors for him regarding his eternal destiny (though shame is an expectation for those believers who do not strive to abide in Christ. See the comments on 2:28). This confidence arises because of the believer being a loving person in this world as Jesus is Himself loving (v. 17). Such growing affection displayed toward other believers harbors no fear of divine judgment. In fact, a maturing **love casts out** and refuses to tolerate **fear**. The disciple **who fears** coming judgment has not matured **in his love** (v. 18).

5:4–5. The individual **born of God overcomes the wicked world**. The divinely implanted nature and new life within enable one to gradually and more successfully overcome sin. While the believer increases in victory over sin, in this life he or she will never be completely (perfectly) free of it. Hence what is said in 2:1, “if anyone sins.” The immediate means of **victory is faith**—relying on Him who became flesh to assist us to live correctly in our flesh (v. 4). Victory in the Christian life is a virtue that is like all other virtues—it is progressive in nature. As the believer matures, he or she increases more and more in victorious living. The overcomer of v. 4 is more precisely identified here, as is the content of his faith. **The one who overcomes the world is only he who believes** in the incarnation (v. 5).

LESSON NUGGET – When you are born of God, you are born to win. Your first birth made you a sinner and a loser, but your second birth makes you a conqueror. The world wants to entice you (2:14-17) and the devil wants to seduce you (Gen. 3:6), but Christ will give you the victory you need if you trust Him.

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary and Wiersbe Expository Outlines on the New Testament*