



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

More About The Children of God (1 John 5:1-5)

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, March 11, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Please note that there will be no evening study for March 11.**

By Julia H. Johnston,

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilled.

*Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin.*

Sin and despair, like the sea waves cold,
Threaten the soul with infinite loss;
Grace that is greater, yes, grace untold,
Points to the refuge, the mighty cross.

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide.
What can avail to wash it away?
Look! There is flowing a crimson tide,
Brighter than snow you may be today.

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,
Freely bestowed on all who believe!
You that are longing to see His face,
Will you this moment His grace receive?

INTRODUCTION

John seems to be wrapping up his letter. One last time he instructed readers concerning the signs of one who is truly a child of God.

¹John 5:1-5 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. ⁴For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith. ⁵Who is the one who

overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

BORN OF GOD

In one sense, all people are “children of God”. Adam and Eve were created in image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and He Himself breathed into them the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). While it is the beyond the scope of this study to fully examine this truth, it is enough to give us the understanding that the life of a person is to be treasured and protected; and each person is worthy of respect.

With that said, the Scriptures are quite clear that not all people are children born of God. All people have been born naturally, but not all have been reborn spiritually.

Jesus told Nicodemus of the necessity of being “born again” if one desires to see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). This second birth is done by the Holy Spirit in a person’s life (John 3:5-8). It is accomplished by the implantation of the seed of the Word of God in a person’s heart (1 Peter 1:23).

What is the new birth?

- It is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- It is a spiritual resurrection (Ephesians 2:1-9)
- It is a partaking of the divine nature of God (2 Peter 2:14).
- It is receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, by faith (John 1:12).
- It is being made the “righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).¹

The big picture is quite bleak. While all people have been born, we have been born into sin and guilt. By nature and by choice, ALL people are sinners (Romans 3:23; 5:23, Ephesians 2:1-4). Therefore, all people need to be “born again” by the work of God through the Holy Spirit and by the sacrificial atonement of Christ—which God, in His amazing grace, has given to those whose faith and trust is in His work and not their own (Romans 1:16; Ephesians 2:8-9).

Ephesians 2:4-7 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, LOBBYISTS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS, LOBBYISTS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, OFFICE #225

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

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that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

The Apostle John referenced the blessed truth about being children of God. He exclaimed “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are” (3:1a). When we begin to see the extent of our sinful rebellion and the great extent to which God went to draw His children unto Himself, we should have no reservation in proclaiming His love and grace.

THE MARKS OF ONE BORN OF GOD

The three marks of one who has been born of God have all been brought up by the Apostle in this letter. As has been stated in earlier studies, these three marks are not “qualifications” for one to be a child of God; for no one can qualify himself to be called a child of God. Instead, these marks are indicators that one has been made (notice the passive verb) a child by the work of Holy Spirit. These marks answer the question: How do we recognize the children of God?

The first mark stated by John, and repeated at the end of this passage, is the right belief concerning the person, nature and work of Jesus. John says that child of God is the one who believes Jesus is the Christ (5:1) and that Jesus is the Son of God (5:5). Both of these titles are used interchangeably. Both of these are divine titles confessed by Peter when asked who he thought Jesus was, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16).

Simply put, a child of God believes the truth about Jesus. It is more than an intellectual assent or agreement to facts about Jesus. It is a trust, a faith, a life-changing reliance upon what has been revealed about Him. When repelling over a cliff, one may “believe” that a rope, harness and anchor may hold him while he goes down. But true belief will lean over the edge of the cliff with nothing else to grab onto. The children of God is known for their total reliance upon Jesus Christ—not upon a Jesus made in their own image and not upon anything other than Jesus—but upon who He is and what He has done on behalf of them.

The second mark is *agape* love exhibited toward God and other children of God. As noted in earlier studies, *agape* love is “a self-sacrificing desire for and delight in the welfare of the one loved.”² This is love for which God is known. It is the type of love which the children of God are to be known. It

is the type of love which presents an unseen God to those who do not know Him (4:12). It is the type of love which is commanded of God’s people.

And it is at this point which John brings in the third mark. A child is God is known as one observes or obeys God’s commands. Look at the progression: A child of God is known by one’s love toward fellow children of God. How is this love seen? By loving God. How is love to God seen? By keeping His commandments.

The author’s thought appears to go in a circle. This is perhaps because the two things involved, as far as he is concerned, cannot exist apart from one another. One cannot love God and keep his commandments without loving the children of God, and one cannot love the children of God without loving God and keeping his commands (cf. 2:7-8; 3:22-24; 4:21).³

Love being shown by obedience to the commands of God is nothing new with the Apostle John. Note these statements by Jesus:

John 14:21a He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me...

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”

John 15:14 You are My friends if you do what I command you.

These are just a sample of passages that discuss the obedience of the believer (cf. Acts 5:32; Romans 1:5, 15:18; Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 1:14). Just like a lack of love in the heart of a child of God is illogical and impossible, so also is a lack of a desire to obey the One who has redeemed a child of God.

And for those who desire to love God and His children through obedience, John stated that the commands of God are not burdensome. Now how can John say such a thing? Daily experience would tell us something different. But, consider these things:

1. John did not say that the commands were not exacting or demanding; there is a high standard to be kept. It is tough as a child to obey God. Rather, John taught that God’s laws were not oppressive or crushing.
2. They are not crushing for “Jesus does not weigh down his people with meaningless laws that do not affect the heart. He gives commands that reveal to us the heart of God and direct our hearts to God.”⁴

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3. Therefore, each command is another chance to show one's love to God. When we look at it in this light, God's commands become a joy and delight to carry out—though they may be difficult (Psalm 119: 14, 16, 24, 97).

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

The Pharisees and experts in Jewish law during the days of Jesus laid a heavy load of man-made laws, rules, regulations and traditions upon the people. In their teaching, one had to do all these things in order to be pleasing to God. Jesus' blessed invitation was one of compassionate relief and mercy. The child of God is already pleasing to God for God made him or her pleasing; now the yoke much more delightful, pleasing and manageable.

Before moving on, please note again friends: we are not allowed to define terms. We are not allowed to dictate how our Christian lives out to be. The child of God will believe the truth as it is revealed, will love God and his fellow siblings in Christ and will obey God's commands.

THE VICTORY OF ONE BORN OF GOD

Obedience can seem quite troublesome and hard at times because there is a system out there that is "hell-bent" on trying to get believers to fall. But John's encouraging word is that victory is in the hand of the child of God.

Throughout his epistle, John references the term "world" with an ethical dimension (2:15-17; 3:1,13; 4:1-6). It is not the actual planet we inhabit, but is the system outside of God that is constantly contrary and opposed to God. Earlier John wrote, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world" (2:16).

As life moves along, though, it seems that these things of the world are constantly barraging and at times, securing a win over a child of God. Believers are not sinless, but they do find forgiveness when they confess and repent (1 John 1:9).

But the truth is that through their faith, they have already overcome the world. Four times in verses 4 & 5, John uses a form of the Greek word **νικη** (nike) translated "overcome" or "victory". The faith given to children of God (Ephesians 2:8) grants them victory.

Jesus' death and resurrection has secured this victory for God's child. Yes, there will be ultimate victory in the last days. This is the main point of the book of Revelation. But John's point is that there is victory now for the believer. They have overcome the philosophies, pressures, lies, and allurements of things opposed to reign, rule and person of God. This is a daily victory for those who by their faith live in love and obedience to God—which is seen in their love for their fellow believers.

Praise be to the Father who exercises His love and grace to make sinful rebels His very own children. Praise be to the Son who gave His life to be the ransom and rose from the dead to give God's children victory. Praise be to the Holy Spirit who convicts, converts and confirms each child of God.

CONCLUSION

John Stott summarizes this passage: "Christian believers are God's children, born from above. God's children are loved by all who love God. Those who love God also keep his commands. They keep his commands because they overcome the world, and they overcome the world because they are Christian believers, born from above."⁵

God, in His love, through His Son Jesus Christ, can forgive a person of his or her sins—are you interested?

¹ Bullet points borrowed from the *New American Standard Bible: The Open Bible Edition* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979), 908.

² R.A. Torrey, *The God of the Bible* (New Kensington, Penn.: Whitaker House, 1999), 169.

³ Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John* The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 172.

⁴ Daniel Akin, *1, 2, 3 John* The New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2001), 192.

⁵ Daniel Akin, 194.