

# 1 John 5:4-15

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 14 January 2018

Preacher: Gethin Jones

[ 0 : 00 ] 1 John chapter 5, episode 11 of 12, so we'll be finishing next week, Lord willing.

And we'll be starting our reading from halfway through verse 4 to the end of verse 15.

I'll just give you some introductory comments just to understand what this chapter is doing. This chapter reminds me a lot of the route I would take to get to the church where I attended in Paris on a Sunday morning.

I would hop on a train from my suburb, and it would be a 5 minute ride on the train, and then I would reach the famous Gare Saint-Hazard, the Saint-Hazard station, which if you're familiar with Monet's paintings, he often painted this train station.

So it's known all around the world, it's not that amazing a station, it's just that Monet was amazed with it in his day. So I would go there, so this is a great landmark of Saint-Hazard station, and then I'd pick up a bike, a bit like a Boris bike, and I would cycle down and I would see the great opera house, the home of the Phantom, and then I would cycle round that roundabout and head down towards the Lourdes Museum, that great art museum, form of palace, and then I would cycle down across the river, where I could see in the distance that old familiar site of the Eiffel Tower.

[ 1 : 45 ] And this passage does a lot like the same, it's just a continuing road, and we will pass three landmarks on the way, and we will see a familiar site as we go.

And you'll spot the landmarks quite easily, because it's introduced by three words, very similar words, And this is. So three times in this passage you'll see those three words together, And this is. And they are the major landmarks that we will pass on the way. And see if you can spot the old familiar site from earlier on in John. Let's read from 1 John 5, starting halfway through verse 4. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world, except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is He who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. Not by the water only, but by the water and the blood.

[ 2 : 59 ] And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree.

If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. For this is the testimony of God that He has borne concerning His Son.

Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning His Son.

And this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life. And this life is in His Son.

Whoever has the Son has life. Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

[ 4 : 16 ] And this is the confidence that we have toward Him. That if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him. This is God's Word.

Well, in 2017, of course, how can we forget, we were celebrating several times over, it seemed, the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

That great discovery that Martin Luther made in the Scriptures, seeing that we are justified by faith alone. I'll ask you, what was the principal heresy of the Reformation?

What was the principal heresy of the Reformation? You might be surprised to hear that. I'm going to give you a quote, not from somebody who liked it. This man was not a fan of the Reformation.

[ 5 : 26 ] Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, who lived from the middle of the 16th to the middle of the 17th century. By Cardinal, you can tell he's a Roman Catholic and he stayed in the Catholic Church.

Here's what he said about the Reformation. The principal heresy of Protestants is that saints may obtain to a certain assurance of their gracious and pardoned states before God.

The principal heresy of Protestants is that saints may obtain a certain assurance of their gracious and pardoned states before God. And if that's the principal heresy of Protestants, it's also the principal heresy of 1 John.

Of course, I mean, it's not a heresy. That is the glorious truth. That is the wonderful thing that John, in this letter, wants to communicate to his readers.

He wants to communicate all kinds of things. But after the terrible shake-up that they've been through with a load of people leaving, having battled with false teaching, he wants them to be assured.

[ 6 : 37 ] That is what he is aiming at. And as we come to the conclusion, that is going to come even more clear. So last week, we saw that he, having discussed obedience and brotherly love several times, he finally sort of gave us a real explanation of what Christian love looks like.

And we saw that it is completely, goes hand in hand, goes completely completely together with Christian belief, with Christian teaching. That if you hear someone saying you should do something that is inconsistent with what Christian teaching is, what the Bible teaches, then something is out of whack here.

Now, either they've given you the doctrine wrong, or they've given you the practice wrong, or both, but if they're not really consistent, something isn't matching. You should be suspicious about that. He's telling them, no, it is completely consistent. And so, Christian love is modeled on Christ and his love for us. We are freed to love because of Christ's love for us.

So, it is Christian, it is bold, we don't have to be afraid. We don't go around fearing each other, just being nice so that people will be nice in return, but we can love without fear.

[ 7 : 53 ] And we can be brotherly because we are born of him, because we believe in the Son of God. We love all those who are born of him, all the begotten ones.

So, we love the begotten one, Jesus Christ, and we love all the begotten ones of God, those who believe in him. And, he ended the passage last week talking about, in verse 3, this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.

We love each other through obeying our Father. And his commandments are not burdensome, for everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.

That's where he ends in things, explaining that this is not a burden that God is placing on us, the call to love one another, and the reason it is not a burden is because the begotten of God have overcome the world.

And, if I were in that place, I'd want some explanation of that, and fortunately, that is precisely what John goes on to do. And here we meet our first of the three big landmarks, and this is, and this is the victory, in verse 4b, this is the victory that has overcome the world.

[ 9 : 07 ] It's some of the same word the whole time, this is the overcoming that has overcome the world. But you can see the idea running through it. He's mentioned before in chapter 2, you have overcome the evil one, probably referencing this particular difficulty that they've been through, wrestling against false teaching.

But this is the victory. Our faith, Christians, have overcome the world because they believe. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

So I'm saying here very clearly that to believe that in Jesus we meet the second person of the Trinity, we meet the Son of God, and we put our faith in Him, and to believe that to put our faith in Him is nothing short of miraculous.

That is an instance of victory over the world. It's not miraculous because it isn't true. It is gloriously true. It's miraculous because we are so blind.

We are fallen. We are sinful and miserable, as the Catechism tells us. And we're so blind we can't even see how blind we are. If your response to the Bible saying you're blind to this truth is saying, I'm not blind, then hopefully it's because your eyes have been opened, but if you're saying I've never been blind, that is how blind you are, then you cannot see how blind you are.

[ 10 : 43 ] And so for someone to acknowledge the truth that Jesus is the Son of God is a remarkable thing. That is a great work of God in His people that they have been released from this

blindness to see the truth.

And that is the victory that has overcome the world. Then in verse 6 he's transitioning now to look at the next landmark.

We spot the next landmark which is down in verse 11 and this is the testimony. And so in verse 6 we're getting ready to look at that. And he's going off the back of verse 5 where he's talking about Jesus the Son of God and he's going to spend some time thinking about who Jesus is.

What a wonderful thing to do for a few verses. So he's looking at who Jesus Christ is and remember as I mentioned before it is significant that he uses that title Jesus Christ.

It's very familiar to us but it was very deliberate for him to put Jesus and Christ together and make it very clear this is one and the same person. False teachers were saying Jesus is one thing Christ is another John is saying Jesus is the Christ.

[12:01] That is Christian teaching. So they're one and the same person. And so he's thinking about who Jesus is. But then we actually read verse 6 and it gets a bit daunting doesn't it?

Maybe if you read on that you thought well usually I just skip over that because I'm not really sure what's going on there but it is really worth reading and it is glorious stuff.

So this is what he says who is this Jesus the one who came by water and blood or could we translate it through water and blood not by the water only but by the water and the blood and the spirit is the one who testifies.

So who's Jesus? The one who came through water and blood and the one to whom the spirit testified. And so we have three witnesses in a sense and so in a Jewish court you needed two or three witnesses to back up any claim and verse 8 the three witnesses agree or literally that they are towards one they're pointing towards one thing.

They're all agreeing. But what on earth do we make of Jesus is the one who came through blood and water and the one to whom the spirit testifies?

[13:20] It's not immediately obvious is it? But don't let it worry you because this is very simply a summary of the gospel. It is an expanded edition of John 3:16 which you're very familiar with hopefully.

And if not you can learn it quite quickly. I doubt you've ever gone to someone and asked for a summary of the gospel and said well Jesus came through water and blood and the spirit testified to him.

But it would be a good summary of the gospel. Not very easy to understand maybe but it would be a good summary of the gospel. He is the son of God, the eternal son of God, who became the anointed one, the Christ, who came through water and blood.

He came through water, we saw that this morning. He's referring to his baptism. He came through the water. And what happened when he came through the water?

The spirit testified. The spirit came down on him looking like a dove and he even heard the voice from heaven from the father saying this is my son. But the spirit was testifying at that moment of him coming through the water.

[14:39] That moment of him coming through the water was a significant part in Jesus' ministry. If you remember from this morning last week we were looking at Jesus' birth and all of a sudden baptism.

That is the next significant thing you need to know. Is that he came through water. This moment of his baptism began his ministry.

It began this particular period of Jesus' ministry wandering around with nowhere to lay his head, teaching, with the spirit continuing to testify, as we read in Acts 2, it was attested to by works and miracles as he went around.

And so the spirit was testifying this water phase, if you will. So he was baptized in water, so he came through the water with the spirit testifying.

And why did he come through water? We saw that this morning, didn't we? He came to identify with his people. People. It's almost as if all the other people had been coming in and their sins were being washed off into the Jordan.

[15:48] And so in a sense the Jordan was almost like it was full of people's sin that had been washing off. And Jesus the righteous one came in and had that sin poured on him.

And so he bore the sin of the people. He wandered as the one ready to represent his people, identifying with them. And when we see the spirit working pretty much anywhere in the Bible, and

when we're pointed to look at the spirit, we should think of the spirit moving things along. We've mentioned this in Zendisville last week. Even in Genesis, when we see the spirit hovering over the face of the waters, we should expect things to start moving from that point. And so in six days we see that because at the beginning we saw the spirit hovering, the world is then brought to its climax for the time being of Adam and you being created.

And each time we see the spirit at work, he moves things along to its appointed end. So the spirit moved Christ into this new phase of ministry after he'd gone through the water.

He did battle with the serpents, with the demons, with Satan, and he wandered around teaching. So he came through water.

[17:07] But he also came through blood, didn't he? And that is more obvious what it should refer to. It obviously refers to his cross, which Jesus refers to as a baptism.

He asks his disciple, can you be baptized with the baptism with which I will be baptized? He'd already been baptized in water, but he was also to come to be baptized with blood. Blood would pour down him as he came through blood.

So having put the sin of the people on him, almost like a scapegoat to be sent out to the wilderness, now he was the Lamb of God who bears the sin of the world to take the punishment for it.

And so on the cross he bore the punishment. Then your question might be, where do we see the Spirit testifying? There was no dove, there was actually just darkness. Where was the dove testifying?

Where was the Spirit testifying rather, when he came through blood? And that is simply what we mean by his resurrection, his ascension, and Pentecost.

[18:18] The whole thing together for one event, which is the Spirit's testimony. The Spirit was breathed on him. The Spirit came as the one who testifies.

He moved Jesus from his death body, and moved him to this glorious state of exaltation. Having been humiliated, he then moves him to exaltation, where he is seated at God's right hand.

That is the work of the Spirit. 1 Timothy 3.16 Paul refers to the resurrection as his being vindicated by the Spirit. The Spirit testified, pointed to him, said this is the Son of God, by raising him from the dead, raising him to heaven, and then through Pentecost, as with the Spirit being poured onto Christ, the Spirit was also being poured onto his body at Pentecost.

It flowed down from the head to the body at Pentecost. Christ. And so that is why we see in verse 10, that whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself, because we have the Spirit.

The Spirit who raised Christ, who brought him up to the heavens, who was poured on him and then on the church at Pentecost, is therefore in us, poured on the church.

[19:44] So this is what God himself has testified about his Son. This is the testimony of God about his own Son.

And so if you're going to accept the testimony of men, and there is reliable testimony there, John the Baptist testified about him, and many good faithful people testified about him, if you're going to accept that, then God's testimony is surely even more reliable.

And so when false teachers came and tried to say, well Jesus and Christ are different things, well Jesus isn't really the Son of God, they're clearly wrong, because God himself has made it clear that this Jesus is the Christ who is the Son of God.

These false teachers are not just saying you're wrong, they're saying God is lying, because God has clearly testified. This is the confidence they can have in the good news that they've heard.

God himself has testified to this. This isn't something that the man has invented. This isn't the invention of a religious community. This isn't a story that people made to try and make sense of it.

[21:03] This isn't a few depressed disciples wanting to try and make those three years worth something. No, these are true events in which the Spirit testified, and so those three things, as he went through the waters and came through blood and the Spirit testified, it is without doubt that this is the Son of God, this is the Christ.

And so, if that is true, what does this testimony that we have mean? This is the testimony, verse 11, this is the next landmark, and this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life, and this is life in his Son.

The Son came through water and blood, and the Spirit testified. That is just a summarized version of when John 3.16 says God gave his only forgotten Son.

And long away, he came through water and blood and was testified to by the Spirit. He was given by God. And so, if we believe in him, what does this verse, and what does John 3.16 tell us? It means we have eternal life. That testifying Spirit who raised him to glory is in us, and has united us to Christ.

[ 22 : 33 ] And therefore, we have eternal life. That is what the testimony results in. That is what the testimony points to. That is what the three agree on. It means that we have eternal life.

life. And this eternal life is life in his Son. And so, in verse 12, we come to the old familiar sight. I wondered if you spotted it as we read it. So, old friends, that phrase, I write these things to you. We've come across that a few times in the book, and here we have it again. It's a bit like when you're listening to a symphony, and it's kind of building up, building up, and then suddenly you hear a theme that you heard ages ago, you can tell this is really coming to the climax now.

This is really wrapping up. This is really getting exciting. He's writing these things to you who believe that you may know that you have eternal life.

Bellarmino is not too happy with this, surely. But we can be. It is possible to know that you have eternal life. I remember growing up, if someone said, they're struggling with assurance.

[ 23 : 42 ] For some weird reason, we thought, oh, they must be a really spiritual person because they're really worried about it. No, lack of assurance is a sickness. It is possible to know, and John wants you to know that you have eternal life.

So I want to ask you, do you know this to be true about yourself? Do you know that you have eternal life? It's clearly been a struggle for John's readers, otherwise he wouldn't be writing about it. And they have people around them saying, well, I've reached a higher plane of existence, I've got a better life, and I clearly just must be one of the special people. But John is saying that if your trust is in the Son, who came through water and blood, and now lives in resurrection power, through the Spirit who testifies, that if your trust is in Him, then you have eternal life in Him.

And this eternal life has been given to you by God Himself. That is the testimony that we have. If you don't yet know this to be true of yourself, I hope you don't in any way think that those who do believe think that we are more special.

I really hope that is not the case. I really hope that we don't think that. but I would then urge you to believe. To believe and trust in Jesus Christ who came through water to bear our sin, who came through blood to bear our punishment, and who was testified to by the Spirit.

[ 25 : 15 ] Because in verse 12, whoever does not have the Son, does not have life. The only way to have life, eternal life, is to have the Son.

And so we come to our final landmark. We've seen that our victory is our faith in the Son, given to us by the power of the Spirit. And because we have that faith, God is testifying that we have life in the Son.

And so finally, our confidence, this is our confidence, this is the confidence in verse 14, that we have toward Him. that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

This is our confidence. He hears us. So as we live in eternal life, and we walk with God, and we bring our desires in line with His, and we offer those desires up to Him, we can know that He hears us.

This is what is so good about having eternal life in the Son. It is restored communion with God. We're thinking about this this morning in Sunday school. We have restored fellowship with Him.

[ 26 : 33 ] He hears us. He will listen to us. He's happy to hear our voice. We can go to Him. We have access to go to Him.

We have no reason to fear going to Him. We did before, but in Jesus Christ, we have no reason to fear going to God.

We should fear Him in the sense of our honouring Him, of our acknowledging His greatness, but we don't need to be afraid. Our victory is our faith in Him that He gives us.

Our testimony, because of the work of Christ, and the work of the Spirit in life, our testimony is that we have life in Him. And our confidence is access to Him in fellowship, in communion, and in prayer.

Let's make the most of that. Let's pray to Him. Let's go to Him. We don't just get life so we can tick the box to say we have life.

[ 27 : 40 ] We have life for us to live it in fellowship with God, in relationship. He gives us life so that we can have voices to speak with, for Him to hear.

Let us use those voices. And if you're not yet a believer, if this doesn't make sense, if you're thinking this can't be true, let me urge you to believe, to keep asking questions, to keep thinking, ask the Lord to help you to see that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the eternal Son of God, who for you, for all who believe, came through water to take on your sins, came through blood to take the punishment for that.

Christ. And praise God, He was testified to by the Spirit. Risen and now sits at God's right hand, where He can hear us, and He has His Father hear us as well. died. So I sit to Him in practice. I sit to that.