

1 John 5:1-12

Imagine a man walking through the jungle.
He's got his backpack on
and he has in it everything he needs.
He gets to the edge of a cliff,
the trees clear and he looks out at a wonderful view.
But suddenly, he hears a sound behind him and spins round to see what it is and
loses his footing.
He slips and the weight of the pack means he overbalances
and falls down the cliff.
He lands at the bottom with a thud but he's alive.
All around him are sheer rock walls.
He can't get out, there's nothing he can do.

And then down comes a rope.
Right in front of him.
And a voice from the top of the cliff says "Tie the rope around yourself and I'll
pull you up."

He looks at the rope.
He doesn't know if he can trust it.
It's his only life line, but what if it breaks?

Now, as Christians we know
that we are saved by what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us.
He's the rope that saves us.
He's our life line, if you will.
And this passage helps us to look at our life line
so that we might be sure of the one we put our trust in.

So we're going step our way through this passage
and see whether we've put our faith,
or trusted,
in something worthwhile.
We're going to look a good hard look at our safety rope.

Now, anyone who knows the difference will tell you a good rope has three
strands twisted together to make it strong.
And our passage works the same way. It has three strands that have been
twisted together.

Believing

So let's look at the first of them.

Verses 1-3 read:

“Everyone who believes
that Jesus is the Christ
has been born of God,
and everyone who loves the parent
loves the child.

By this we know that we love the children of God,
when we love God and obey his commandments.

For the love of God is this,
that we obey his commandments.
And his commandments are not burdensome.”

The first strand, the first idea,
is *believing* that Jesus is the Christ.

And it's an important one to get right because the others hang of it.
But what's so important about it?

Well, further down in this passage it tells us. From verse 12

“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,
so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

It's important because what is at stake
is nothing less than eternal life.

If you believe that Jesus is the Christ,
you will have eternal life.

John uses several phrases to say this,
but they all mean the same thing.

Being born of God,
have life in his name,
have eternal life.

These are all ways of saying that if you believe that Jesus is the Christ,
that's what makes you a Christian;
you belong to him
and you will live forever with him.

So, believing, trusting, relying that Jesus is the Christ is everything. The whole
passage builds from there.

So that's the first strand of our little rope. *Believing* that Jesus is the Christ.

Now the second and third strand of our rope flow out of believing that Jesus is
the Christ.

But they don't work unless belief is there first.

Love

The second strand centres around the word *love*. Let me show you what I mean.

“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God,
and everyone who loves the parent loves the child.
By this we know that we love the children of God,
when we love God...”

Loving the parent means loving the child. The parent is, obviously enough, God.
Which means the child is other Christians.

This means that if we love God
then we are to love other Christians,
other children of God.

John said, everyone who loves the parent loves the child. It makes sense doesn't it?

We can't separate the two.

But sometimes this is a challenge: to love each other.
Sometimes other Christians are hard to love.
Sometimes they are *really* hard to love. But we don't get a choice.
And loving each other,
caring for and serving each other,
is part of how we show that we love God.
If we believe that Jesus is the Christ,
then we are to love each other and love God.

So that's the second strand,
love God and therefore love one another. Now, the third strand in the rope tells
us *how* we are to do that.

We love God and each other by(?)
obeying the commandments of God.

From Verse 2,

“By this we know that we love the children of God,
we love God and obey his commandments.
For the love of God is this,
that we obey his commandments.
And his commandments are not burdensome...”

Now for some in this era, to say that love leads to obedience seems counter
intuitive.

Our world says,
surely loving people
would mean letting them do what they want!
How can it be loving
to tell people what to do,
or even demand such a thing as obedience.

There are even some who say
that God must not be loving
because he wants obedience from his children.

But obedience is a choice.
It's a choice born of God
out of love for the one you believe in.
It's like when soldiers head into war.
In a very tangible way,
they entrust their lives
to the commanding officer they serve.
And when their CO gives an order,
they obey.
They have to. Their lives may very well depend on it.

In the same way we obey God.
We love him and entrust our lives to him. He is our Lord, our King, our ruler
as well as our saviour.
And so, we choose to obey him. And we choose so out of love.

And the great this is, it's not a heavy load. As we keep reading

“And his commandments are not burdensome,
for whatever is born of God
conquers the world.
And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith.
Who is it that conquers the world
but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

That is, our obedience to the command to love,
actually demonstrates that we have victory over the world.
But what does that mean?
What does it mean that our faith and obedience conquers the world?

Well throughout his writings,
John uses the term 'the world'
to refer to humanity in it's rebellion against God.
So when he talks about our faith conquering the world,

what he means
is that we are trusting in Jesus' victory on the cross
rather than following the world.

Jesus conquers sin on the cross

and we trust or have faith in that.
And when we trust in that victory,
we conquer the world.

So John has weaved together a rope of belief, love and obedience for us.
This is the rope that shows us how to be a Christian.
Those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, love God and obey him are born of
God.
They love one another because they are children of God together.
They love God and so obey his commandments,
commandments that are not burdensome because we have conquered the world.
We have conquered the world
because we believe that Jesus is the Son of God. (pause)

John wants us to be assured that if we believe that Jesus is the Christ
then all else will follow,
we will have eternal life.

The rope of belief, love and obedience (with belief coming first) is what we hang
on to.
Let's make sure as a church we're believing Jesus is the Son of God,
loving God and each other
and obeying the commandments of God.

(Long pause)

Part 2: Knowledge Through Testimony

But if we're doing all that it begs the question:
Why should I believe that Jesus is the Christ.
How do I know that Jesus is the Son of God?

John addresses this in his next section.
In these verses, he gives the evidence
for why we should believe
that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of God.
Let's read verses 6-8.

"This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ,
not with the water only
but with the water and the blood.

And the Spirit is the one that testifies,
for the Spirit is truth.
There are three that testify:
the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree."

Jesus the Christ came by water and blood. The Spirit testifies to this
because the Spirit is truth.
In fact, all three are evidence.
The Spirit, the water and the blood agree that Jesus is the Christ.
He's the Messiah. Nice and simple.
Three testimonies
 working together
to strengthen our assurance
that Jesus is the Son of God.

But what exactly do the water and blood refer? What do they mean?

The water and blood referring to his resurrection.

How is it about the resurrection?

Well, we will be helped enormously by heading over to John's gospel for a
moment.

We're going to hear what happened after Jesus died on the cross.
From John 19:31 we read

³¹ Since it was the day of Preparation,
the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath,
especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity.

So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken
and the bodies removed.³²

Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him.

³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

³⁴ Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once **blood and water came out.** ³⁵ (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.)

So, John includes the details of the water and blood that came from Jesus' side. And later, when Jesus has been resurrected, the scars of his hands *and his side* become crucial in proving to his disciples and others that Jesus was alive. The scars in his side showed that he came back from the dead.

John goes to great lengths to show that Jesus showed the scars in his hands and his side to the disciples to prove that he had come back from the dead. When Thomas comes back, he says unless I see the scars in his hands and in his side I won't believe. And when Jesus appears to Thomas he says,

'Put out your hand and put them in my side.' See these scars.

So, we can say that because the blood and the water came from Jesus' side and because the scars in his hands and his side are such a big part of the resurrection witness,

it's likely that when John talks about the water and the blood what he's referring to

are the scars that prove the resurrection.

This would fit our passage because John has used this idea before. The idea of Jesus' scars helping his followers to believe that He has come back from the dead.

Let me show you from John 20:20. Jesus came and stood among them and said 'Peace to you'.

²⁰ After he said this, **he showed them his hands and his side.**

Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

But how does the Spirit fit in?

Our passage says the water and the blood and the Spirit testify together.

If the water and the blood refer to the scars that prove the resurrection, how does the Spirit fit in with this?

If we read on, we see that John has combined the witness of the scars proving his resurrection, with the Spirit as further testimony.

²⁰ After he said this, **he showed them his hands and his side.**

Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me,

so I send you."

²² When he had said this,

he breathed on them and said to them, "**Receive the Holy Spirit....**"

This shows us that John has already made the link between the the scars of his hands and side and the Holy Spirit.

He's already shown that once the Lord Jesus was resurrected the evidence from his scars helps his disciples to believe and the Holy Spirit helps his disciples to believe.

Okay, so what does all that mean for us?

Well I think what John is trying to tell us in this bit is that Jesus' scars point to the fact that he was risen from the dead.

The Holy Spirit testifies to the same thing.

In fact, all three of them testify to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the one risen from the dead.

John wants us to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so he provides the evidence we need to trust that.

I'll say it again, Jesus has risen from the dead, you can, you should believe that Jesus is the Christ. He is the Son of God.

That testimony is how we can trust,
how we can *know*
that we can believe, we can obey and love.

I'll finish with the words John gives us in verse 13.

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you might *know* that you have eternal life."

Believe in the Son of God. Have eternal life.

Amen