

**Reading:** 1 John 5:1-21

**Theme:** Sure Testimony.

Last time we noted that believers are overcomers, victors. If we are to be these, then we are to realise we are to have a faith rooted and grounded upon unshakeable certainties. Warren Wiersbe says in v6-21 we have 5 certainties:

1. Jesus is God (v6-10)
2. Believers have eternal life (v11-13)
3. God answers prayer (v14-15)
4. Christians do not habitually practise sin (v16-19)
5. The Christian life is the real, the true life (v20-12)

John wrote these to encourage his 1<sup>st</sup> readers (*and all since*) who are facing difficult, trying and uncertain times – especially when the truth of who the Lord Jesus is was attacked, undermined and so their faith was attacked.

John starts to close this letter with wonderful and amazing statements about who Jesus is – so that they and we can be certain, sure of who we are asked to put, or have put our faith in. We are looking at big, important and foundational issues that enable us to live our Christian lives on firm and secure foundations. Here in v6-8 there is a threefold testimony as to who Jesus is; this will lead on to v9 & 10 where we will see reasons to accept this threefold testimony and then in v11-13 we will see the consequences of accepting this testimony.

Before we go any further, I want to give a technical explanation, especially if you use AV or NKJV as you will soon note that in NIV and other versions part of v7 & 8 are missing. AV v7-8 reads *"For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and*

*the blood: and these three agree in one.*” Scholars studying manuscripts found an insertion appeared at some point into the Latin version and adopted by Greek manuscripts after the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest manuscripts do not have such in them, nor are they quoted by early church fathers in their defence of the Trinity - who would have made use of such a prime text. That is the reason we will be going along with the NIV text in our studies.

I want us to look at 3 things to get to grips with v6-8, but recognise there are other understandings and opinions of these difficult verses and I present what is to my mind and heart, the closest I have to understanding them:

### **1. The Shift in Emphasis.**

In v5 John emphasised that the overcoming ones were those who believed that Jesus is the Son of God. There John was attacking one of the false teachings of his time which said Jesus was only an ordinary man, born of Mary and Joseph and the false teachers added that the divine person of “Christ” was joined to Jesus, the natural son of Joseph, at His baptism and left Him before His sufferings. So, it was the ordinary man Jesus who died and suffered on the cross. To these false teachers Jesus was just a fine and good man, a wonderful example but that was all.

John has said that Jesus was and is the Son of God but here his emphasis changes to “Jesus Christ”. We are moving from the glorious truth that Jesus is the Son of God i.e. the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity in human flesh - which John wrote of back in 1:1 - that God took real flesh and really lived among us. In this we have the truth of the incarnation - the conception, birth, growth and development of the God man. Now the emphasis is on the One who came - Jesus Christ. This Jesus, the Son of God, God in human flesh is the one who came by water and the blood. The

word Christ means Anointed One, the translation of the OT word 'Messiah'.

John here is correcting and counteracting the false teachers and he does so by emphasising the term "Christ". Jesus the Son of God, the God man, is, was and always will be the Christ. John uses specific tenses here - the one who came (*aorist tense*) and this stresses a once and for all act - not coming and going, but that Jesus the Son of God, the God man, came as the Christ, remained as the Christ and is the Christ.

The phrase "*the one who came*" is important to note, for in the minds and expectation of the Jews it was a phrase they used of the Messiah, the Christ "*the one to come*" or "*he that cometh*". In John 1:15 we have John the Baptist speaking and saying "*He who comes after me...*" John the Baptist also used this term when he was imprisoned and disillusioned and sent disciples to ask Jesus who He was in Luke 7:19 "*Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?*" This phrase "*the one who came*" is equivalent to saying He is the promised One, sent from God as the Saviour, the Christ.

It says loud and clear that Jesus, the God man, is the anointed one, the Christ, the Messiah and that is how He came. It includes His incarnation, but also the messianic expectation and underlines the truth that Jesus is the anointed one sent from and by God. Here is ground for tremendous comfort and certainty for his 1<sup>st</sup> readers and for us concerning who Jesus is. John goes on to say that this One came by water and blood, now we see:

## **2. The Significance of the Terms 'Water and Blood'.**

Many commentators have written much on these terms and I'll try and summarise pages of writing on the 3 main ideas -

**Firstly:** there are those who say (e.g. Augustine) it refers to the water and blood that flowed from Jesus' side when He was pierced by the spear - as seen personally by John himself (John 19:34ff). Would John have placed such an emphasis on that one event? Personally, that did not ring true with me.

**Secondly:** others say (e.g. Luther and Calvin) that these terms refer to the 2 sacraments - baptism (water) and the Lord's supper (wine which represents the blood). Again, I think this is unlikely as it does not refer to the body of the Lord which is represented by the bread. Anyway, in the Lord's supper it is not the blood of Christ, but wine symbolising, reminding, signifying to us the blood of the Lord Jesus. Think about it - how could the Lord Jesus be said to have come through the sacraments?

**Thirdly:** was the approach that was proposed early on by early Christians e.g. Tertullian - who said that water refers to Jesus' baptism and blood refers to Jesus' death. Further thoughts on this speaks of the water and the blood referring to the OT rituals and sacrifices of washing and purification - outward defilement and removal of sin was pictured there and represents Jesus' life and death.

Jesus the Christ, the Messiah came, yet why did He come into the world? He came to save His people from their sins and the consequences of their sins. He did not do it in some cold, distant manner, but He became bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh, He came and dwelt among us, the Word was made flesh and identified Himself intimately with us. He had no sin, no guilt no spot or blemish. Yet as John the Baptist was preaching, Jesus went to be baptised by him in the water of Jordan and in Matthew 3:13-15 we see that Jesus identified with us in our sin - the Christ, the Son of God commenced His ministry by, through and in water. At that

time there was a divine ownership and declaration of who He really and truly is. The Christ, the one who was the Christ, came into His ministry by water and by divine approval.

The false teachers would have no trouble saying this, but John adds “*and by blood*” - not water only! “Blood” here refers to His death. The Christ did not merely identify Himself with us in our sin, but He went further, much, much further, for He died to pay the debt our sins owed to God. His death is absolutely essential alongside His identification with us in baptism, for His death removed our sins, their guilt and punishment.

John here deals with the person of Jesus as the Christ and His work of atonement. This is the one John’s emphasis focuses on for his 1<sup>st</sup> readers and for us. This allows us to see the firm, the secure and certain foundation our faith rests upon. This One is our Messiah, our Saviour and our faith is to be in Him and Him alone and this enables us to be those who overcome, who are victorious over the world and all its false ideas.

Do we need to question our own lives and ask ourselves if we have this Saviour as our Saviour? Or maybe we are we trusting a Jesus of our own imagination, sentimentality or making? Only the real Jesus of biblical truth can do us any eternal good and save us. Have we recognised that to save us from hell, the Son of God was not only promised, but was the sent One, who came willingly into this world, who identified with us as a real human being, who lived a perfect life, identified with us as sinners and died to save us. We need to recognise this personally and understand He did it for us.

### **3. The Superb Witnesses.**

In OT the law demanded that “*A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.*” (Deuteronomy 19:15). Here

in v7-8 John speaks of the superb trio of witnesses – the Spirit, the water and the blood. We have touched upon the witness of the water and the blood by which Jesus Christ came – speaking of His person and work, so will focus on the Spirit’s witness.

The Spirit, the Holy Spirit is characterised as the witnessing, the testifying one. The idea of testify/witness/testimony occurs 8 times in v6-11 (NIV). Remember John wrote as an eyewitness, gave testimony to these things (1:1ff). “*Because the Spirit is the truth*” (v7) and He cannot, will not give false testimony, be a false witness or lie. The false teachers at this time were claiming new revelations about Jesus, making out the Holy Spirit had guided them into such things. Yet He, the Holy Spirit, cannot say one thing about Jesus and then change it at another time! He gives witness to the truth concerning Jesus - the truth of the water and the blood, the incarnation, the life, person and work of Jesus. The water, blood and Spirit are in perfect agreement on who Jesus is, all He has accomplished. This reinforces the solid foundation we have. It declares the truth about Jesus is reliable and certain.

The Holy Spirit was sent by the Father and Son in all His fullness on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit now applies and gives testimony to the life, person and suffering of Christ. What did the Holy Spirit, have the apostles declare and give testimony to? Take a look at Acts 17:2-3 “*As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that **the Christ** had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you **is the Christ**," he said.*” The Apostles showed Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, He had to suffer, die and this is what the Spirit, water and blood testifies to.

The Spirit gave testimony to who Jesus was in His life. John the Baptist spoke of this in John 1:33 *“I would not have known Him, except that the one who sent me to baptise with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is He who will baptise with the Holy Spirit.’”* Also, in John 3:34 *“For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.”*

When Jesus was baptised (*the water*), the Holy Spirit descended and the voice of the Father was heard declaring who Jesus is and the testimony is “the Christ”. Jesus’ death seemed to signal to the Jews that He was no one special, but the Holy Spirit declared He was - as Paul says in Romans 1:3-4 *“regarding His Son, who as to His human nature was a descendant of David, and **who through the Spirit of holiness** was declared with power to be the Son of God, by His resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”* The Jews failed to realise, as initially did Jesus’ own disciples - that the Christ had to suffer and rise again (Luke 24:26 & 46).

In the preaching of the NT church, the OT Scriptures are shown to point to the suffering Christ - fulfilling all the Holy Spirit directed OT prophets to say and write of the person and work of the Lord Jesus. The grand theme of Scripture, both OT and NT, is Christ’s person and work, especially His death. Some write and speak of the scarlet thread running throughout the Bible - from Genesis 3 right through to Revelation 22 and it declares and points us both on to and back to the Christ who came by water and blood - all testified to by the Holy Spirit who had been working in all history and still is.

Yes, there the Spirit’s testimony is vitally important, but it is important that the Spirit, water and blood are testified, witnessed to in our lives personally. The Holy Spirit will take of Christ’s and

make such known to us - not in an abstract way, but causing us to recognise, to realise that the Bible - the recorded testimony of the Spirit about the water and blood, is true and real. The Holy Spirit will testify this to our hearts and lives also.

Perhaps at one time the Bible, my preaching, anyone's preaching, was strange and mysterious - even more so than now! Yet things began to make sense, and we saw clearer of who Jesus is and what He has done for ones like us – but not in an abstract way, as we recognised we needed to trust Him as our own Saviour - as these things dawned upon us, perhaps gradually or even suddenly. This is the work and witness of God the Spirit in our own lives.

The Holy Spirit will testify to the truth - that which He has already revealed in God's word and so we are to be cautious, alarmed and keep away from those who proclaim a "Saviour" who is not the Son of God, not the Christ, who did not come by water and blood. We will listen to the testimony of the Spirit in the word of God concerning the water and blood. As we do so we will behold and see a glorious, wonderful and all sufficient Saviour. I pray these things would be true in our own experiences and may we ever proclaim such message with certainty and we would live certain this Saviour Jesus Christ, the Son of God is our own Saviour.