

Treasure Your Christian Faith.

Text: 1 John 5:4-12

1) Our Christian Faith Is Based On Jesus Christ

Suggested Hymns:

2) It Overcomes The World

101, 321, 97, 102, 179

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 John 5:4-12, *⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. ⁵ Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

⁶ This is He who came by water and blood — Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. ⁷ For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. ⁸ And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

⁹ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. ¹⁰ He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.

¹¹ And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

A great battle has been fought and won. God's Son has conquered the world! He conquered death!

The strife is o'er, the battle done;
Now is the Victor's triumph won;

O let the song of praise be sung. Alleluia!¹

We are filled with joy, because we, too, share in the victory which was won by Jesus Christ. The Christian is to value his Christian faith as his highest possession. Why? We find the answer in our text. With the help of God's Holy Spirit let us meditate upon the theme: *Treasure Your Christian Faith*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Treasure Your Christian Faith

Our Christian Faith Is Based On Jesus Christ

The world is always giving birth to new philosophies in religion inventing some new theory about a Divine Being.

In the days of John, there was a man by the name of Cerinthus, who was teaching a theory that considered God too high a Being to take on the form of man. Cerinthus contended that when Jesus was born, He was merely another human being and not at one and at the same time God. He denied that God was incarnate in Christ.

But John had been with the God-Man Jesus Christ, and knew for a fact that Jesus was both God and Man. This John knew and believed. This conviction he treasured as the very heart and core of his personal faith.

John assures you in the text that Jesus is God's Son. He calls forth every testimony at his command to verify the fact so that you will treasure your Christian faith as your highest possession.

Testimonies on Earth.

The Water of Baptism. — *“This is He who came by water ... — Jesus Christ.* Here John recalls that Jesus Christ left His private life in Nazareth and came out to the place where John the Baptist was preaching and baptising. Jesus requests that He be baptised by John. The writer is reminded of the happenings of that day. After Jesus was baptised a voice from heaven declared: *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*² The Father calls Jesus His Son. And through this outward sign — water — Jesus Christ is placed under the Law to fulfil the demands of the Law for all mankind.

The water of Baptism was the first step toward Christ's redemptive work on earth. As Jesus proceeds with His mission as the Saviour of Man, sent from God, He carries with Him one of His credentials: the Water of Baptism.

The Blood of Atonement. — ***“This is He who came by water and blood — Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood.”*** Jesus came as the Saviour of the world with a double sign: the water of Baptism and the blood of atonement.

It would be folly for us to think of Jesus only as the perfect Man. He was not on a mission to make a name for Himself. He was on a mission that was designed and planned by God Himself.

After sin entered the world, God promised a Saviour, and His Son is the Saviour. He laid down His life on the cross. He shed His blood. What greater foundation do you need on which to base your faith than on Jesus Christ, who poured out His precious blood to atone for your sins and my sins and the sins of the whole world?

When Jesus died the shameful death of crucifixion, a lone soldier raised his voice: ***“Truly this Man was the Son of God!”***³ The events at the tomb the first Easter morning clearly witness that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and Saviour of the world. The stone was rolled away from the opening; the soldiers were as dead men; angels delivered a powerful message to the women; and, above all, there was the living Lord speaking to Mary. An indisputable witness is the resurrection of Christ to His divine Sonship!

You can be confident that your Christian faith, based on Jesus Christ, is the only saving faith and as such can be treasured. When Jesus had completed His mission on earth by the shedding of His blood on Calvary, He carried with Him another of His credentials: the blood of atonement.

The Spirit of Truth

“And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.” It is the Holy Spirit — the Spirit of Truth — that convinces you that the Christian faith is the true faith. This Spirit is the absolute Truth. He cannot lie. The Holy Spirit can be trusted because of His own testimony of Jesus Christ. This Spirit of Truth works miracles by the Gospel.

The Holy Spirit changes us from sinners to saints. He makes people new creatures who will walk before God in “*spirit and in truth.*” The Holy Spirit makes people see in Jesus not only a perfect Man, but the Son of God and Saviour of the world.

He is always pointing people to Jesus Christ, who suffered and died in our place, reminding us that it was Jesus, God’s Son, who fulfilled the Law in our stead and redeemed us from our sin.

The Holy Spirit during the Easter season points people to the risen Lord and convinces us that our faith is in a living and powerful God, who keeps His promises and carries out His mission to the very end.

The Spirit of Truth causes Christians to shout “Alleluia” as they see Christ, the ascended Lord, ruling all things as the God of all creation. These wonderful truths which you believe come to you by the testimony of the Spirit of Truth through the saving Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ. You will treasure your Christian faith all the more as you consider another credential to testify that Jesus is the Christ of God.

Testimony In Heaven

John proceeds to call for a testimony from heaven. He says: “***For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.*** The three Persons in the God-head are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three agree with each other in their testimony that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Naturally they have one testimony, since they are One. God the Father, the Creator of all things, bears witness of Christ when at the Transfiguration He spoke: “***This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!***”⁴

God the Son bears witness of Himself when He says in John 11:25–26, ***I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.***

And God the Holy Spirit bears witness of the Christian faith, for it is His office to glorify Christ. Thus all three Persons in the God-head agree in their testimony that Jesus is indeed our divine Saviour and therefore faith in Him saves.

Testimonies on Earth Agree

John repeats for the sake of emphasis in verse 8, ⁸ ***And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.*** Their testimonies are one and the same.

The water of Baptism, the blood of atonement, and the Spirit of Truth never cease to witness to the world that the Christian faith is solidly based on Jesus Christ, God's Son.

The Holy Spirit through the Gospel is continuously witnessing to the Christian faith, and in doing so He uses every medium of communication, including radio, television and the internet.

Wherever the Gospel is preached, the Holy Spirit attests Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour of the world. As often as the water in Baptism is administered, it is the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, applying the cleansing from sin made by our Lord Jesus Christ.

As often as the Lord's Supper is administered, it conveys and seals to communicants the remission of sins which was purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ. These witnesses on earth are constantly giving you every reason to place the highest value on Christ's salvation, and Christian faith by which it is received.

God's Testimony Guarantees

Now our text says: ⁹ ***If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.*** If you accept human testimony, which you certainly do, God's own testimony concerning His Son is more valuable.

Speaking of Christ's mission on earth, John says in 1 John 4:14, ¹⁴ ***And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.*** John argues: Now, if our testimony amounts to anything at all, and you do accept our account of the Son of God, just think how much more conclusive the witness of God Himself must be concerning His own Son!

In the Gospel and in the two Sacraments, Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, God guarantees you again and again that Jesus is the Christ and that these are the means of receiving the spiritual blessings procured by the Son of God.

God has ordained these testimonies to be presented to you continually as His guarantee that faith in Jesus Christ is to be treasured.

God Is Trustworthy

Our text continues, *¹⁰ He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.*

Not everyone believes these truths, which the Christian faith accepts. Unbelievers consider God untrustworthy. And it is indeed strange that they will not accept the facts which God presents to them. They believe that they can get along without God, His Son, His Spirit, and the means of grace.

Now, they are deceiving themselves and at the same time practically calling God a liar by refusing to believe God's Word and to give the Spirit of God a chance to work in them the gift of faith and the blessings it imparts.

Thank God, that you are a Christian and that you regard your faith and all that God has revealed to you as trustworthy! The Holy Spirit, abiding in you, enlightening and sanctifying you in your Christian faith, makes you a mighty witness to the world. Everything that a Christian does and says is motivated by the Spirit of God.

The value of the Christian faith depends not only on what it is based, but also on what it accomplishes. John says the Christian faith is to be treasured because it overcomes the world.

2. Treasure Your Christian Faith It Overcomes The World

John says that the Christian faith is the only way in which the world has ever been conquered. *⁴ For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. ⁵ Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

We Live In Bad Surroundings

John is speaking of the world of evil which affects your soul. You know that much of the environment in which you live is bad. Take, for instance, the spiritual standard of many people whom you meet in your association from day to day. They trust in their own wisdom, honour, and virtue.

This is common practice among the worldly-minded people. There are those who feel they can do anything as long as they are not found out by their fellow men. Besides the influence of a bad environment which would pull you downward, there is also the bad influence of some movies, radio and television programs, the internet, as well as books and magazines. These influences seek to bring the Christian down to the level of the world and a worldly philosophy of living. This means that you are involved in a spiritual battle with the world all your life.

The world is self-centred and desires only to please itself. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are the world's joy and crown. The spirit of the world is *"eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die."*

The natural man does not desire the things of God. He sets aside the Commandments of God's will, preferring to do the devil's will. Such worldly-minded, unregenerated minds and hearts are trying to influence the Christian. Satan is always at work through his lying allies, seeking to tear down your faith and enrol you with the sinful world in his campaign of conquest. There is always the battle between the evil forces of the world of darkness, and the power of faith in the Christian.

Temptation

Then there is the world of temptation. You look back upon your life, and you see in how many instances you have miserably failed to walk in the perfection which God expects.

In the morning you arise with a prayer, and you say: *"Today I'm going to walk with God and live a better life."* So you set your course with new thoughts for the day, and set it along the path of God's ways. Then at the close of the day, you review your accomplishments in the light of God's Commandments, and you find many disappointments. You realise that you have failed many times!

Each day the battle with your own flesh, your environment, with sin, temptation, and Satan is renewed.

Not Any Faith Will Win

Not any kind of faith will overcome the world. We should realise not everything that is called "faith" will be victorious in its battle with the world.

Faith that is born of man has never won the victory over sin, death, and hell, and it never can. That kind of a faith is designed by the world itself. Those who still cling to the world are still slaves to the world.

Christian Faith Alone Wins

The faith, St. John says, that wins the victory over the world is ***“born of God.”*** Both faith and love show that we have been born of God and that the power of a new life is in us.⁵

You have done nothing to work this victorious faith in you. The Christian faith is created in your heart by the work of the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit creates faith in your heart through the Word of God, you become a new creature — a new man in Christ Jesus.

You bear the image of our victorious Son of God. You can overcome the world because Christ Himself came to earth to do battle with the enemies in the world. He became the Victor over these spiritual enemies which war against your soul. He took all the evils which would attack and destroy the children of God and carried them to Calvary.

The Son of God was crucified and buried that He might overcome these enemies. He conquered death, with the result that eternal death cannot touch us. He rose from the dead a Victorious Lord, and His resurrection is conclusive proof that our faith in Him is not vain and that we are no longer in our sins.

Jesus Christ even now by His intercession secures victories for all who share the Christian faith. Now, faith that accepts these truths is precious. It will go from victory to victory, conquering sin, rising above temptation, crucifying the flesh, submitting to persecution and tribulation with complete confidence that you now have the power — the Christian faith — to carry on your struggle with the world and win.

St. Paul says in Romans 8:37, ³⁷ ***Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*** And likewise in Philippians 4:13, ¹³ ***I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.***

Victory Is Assured

The Holy Spirit through the Word and Sacraments supplies you with the strength and power necessary to oppose these evil forces in the world. With His

help you can resist temptation, reject all that is false, renounce Satan, and quiet an accusing conscience.

With the power of the Christian faith, God gives you strength to enjoy assured victory. God is always present with His blessing and guidance. He is not far away. He refreshes you every time you come in contact with the Gospel. For in the Gospel you see the real Victor over the world, your Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bohemian reformer, John Huss, conquered, even though he was burned at the stake. He loved God and his fellow men so much that he wanted the common people to read God's Word in their own language. For his holy endeavours he was burned at the stake. In the midst of flames he sang praises to God until his voice was stilled by death. His faith cost him his earthly life, but it was a real spiritual victory over the "world" of his day.

Whatever would rob you of peace with God can be labelled an enemy of God and of your soul. With your Christian faith you can conquer them.

The Gift of Eternal Life

Think, for instance, of the victory Jesus won over death. That is something wonderful. When Christ conquered death, He gave real meaning to living. You realise that the life you now have is a spiritual life and that it not only gives you assured victory over the world, but also endures beyond this world.

The Christian has confidence that after this present life, there awaits him the supreme gift of eternal life with Christ, as St. John concludes: ¹¹ *And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.* ¹² *He who has the Son has life.* Note that this is present tense.

Always treasure your Christian faith. It based on the only sure foundation, on Jesus Christ, God's Son, and it also wins the victory over the world. Oh, that everybody would come to the knowledge of this truth.

May the Holy Spirit through our life witness to all people the peace and happiness found alone in the Christian faith. May we always be ready to share our treasure with others, pointing them to the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Hymn 97

² Matthew 3:17

³ Mark 15:39

⁴ Matthew 17:5

⁵ R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of Peter, John, Jude* Columbus Ohio: Wartburg Press, 1945, p523