

I Intro. (Feb. 1, 8, 2009)

Something fundamental about salvation is clearly stated in 1Jn. 5:1a. This again has implications that flow out into the love of the brethren (5:1b-3). Finally, faith resulting in the new birth is victory over the world (5:4-5).

II The New Birth in Connection with Love and Victory (1Jn. 5:1-5)

A. Something fundamental about salvation (5:1a)

1. (vs. 1a) The simple statement is almost too good to be true and is thus explained away by most teachers: “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (Πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων [*‘believe {in} someth., be convinced of someth., w. that which one believes {in} added...by means of a ὅτι-clause believe that*’¹; “many substantival participles in the NT are used in generic utterances. The πᾶς ὁ ἀκούων {or ἀγαπῶν, ποιῶν, etc.} formula is always or almost always generic. As such it is expected to involve a *gnomic* idea. Most of these instances involve the present participle. But if they are already *gnomic*, we would be hard-pressed to make something more out of them—such as a progressive idea. Thus, for example, in Matt 5:28, ‘everyone who looks at a woman’ {πᾶς ὁ βλέπων γυναῖκα} with lust in his heart does not mean ‘continually looking’ or ‘habitually looking,’ any more than four verses later ‘everyone who divorces his wife’ {πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ} means ‘repeatedly divorces’! This is not to deny a habitual *Aktionsart* in such *gnomic* statements. But it is to say that caution must be exercised. In the least, we should be careful not to make statements such as, ‘The present participle βλέπων {in Matt 5:28} characterizes the man by his act of *continued* looking.’ This may well be the meaning of the *evangelist*, but the present participle, by itself, can hardly be forced into this mold.”²; After all that then Wallace says in a footnote, “The aspectual force of the present ὁ πιστεύων seems to be in contrast with ὁ πιστεύσας. The aorist is used only eight times {plus two in the longer

ending of Mark}. The aorist is sometimes used to describe believers as such and thus has a generic force {cf. for the clearest example the *v.l.* at Mark 16:16; cf. also 2 Thess 1:10; Heb 4:3; perhaps John 7:39; also, negatively, of those who did not [μὴ] believe: 2 Thess 2:12; Jude 5}. The present occurs six times as often {43 times}, most often in soteriological contexts {cf. John 1:12; 3:15, 16, 18; 3:36; 6:35, 47, 64; 7:38; 11:25; 12:46; Acts 2:44; 10:43; 13:39; Rom 1:16; 3:22; 4:11, 24; 9:33; 10:4, 11; 1 Cor 1:21; 14:22 [*bis*]; Gal 3:22; Eph 1:19; 1 Thess 1:7; 2:10, 13; 1 Pet 2:6, 7; 1 John 5:1, 5, 10, 13}. Thus, it seems that since the aorist participle was a live option to describe a ‘believer,’ it is unlikely that when the present was used, it was aspectually flat. The present was the tense of choice most likely because the NT writers by and large saw *continual* belief as a necessary condition of salvation. Along these lines, it seems significant that the *promise* of salvation is almost always given to ὁ πιστεύων {cf. several of the above-cited texts}, almost never to ὁ πιστεύσας {apart from Mark 16:16, John 7:39 and Heb 4:3 come the closest |the present tense of πιστεύω never occurs in Hebrews|}.”³ Evidently Wallace can offer *no proof whatsoever in the text* that the NT writers most often chose the present tense because “by and large” they “saw continual belief as a necessary condition of salvation,” and this especially in light of the fact that they certainly felt a complete freedom to use aorist tense verbs for the idea of “to believe” as well. Consequently his whole argument is vapid because to observe that they chose the present tense more often than the aorist is not in and of itself to conclude *why* they did so. Apparently it is Wallace’s perseverance theology that leads him to this conclusion.; A.T.R. makes the inexcusable mistake of attributing to the present tense “believe {πιστεύων}” a semantic value, which it simply does not bear: “Hence John insists on this form of faith {πιστεύων...here in the full sense, stronger than in 3:23; 4:16, seen also in πιστῆς...in verse 4, where English and Latin fall down in having to use another word for the verb} as he does in verse 5 and in accord with the purpose of John’s Gospel {John 20:31}. Nothing less will satisfy John, not merely

¹Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

²Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software) 1999, c1996.

³Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software) 1999, c1996.

intellectual conviction, but full surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.”⁴ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστός [“as an appellative *the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ*”⁵; “Those who confess the sonship and messiahship of Christ by the Spirit {1 Jn. 4:15; 2:22; 4:2} are born of God {5:1}, but those who contest them are antichrists {2:22} controlled by the spirit of antichrist {4:2}.”⁶ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ [“quite predom. of the true God, somet. with, somet. without the art...With prep.”⁷] γεγέννηται [“to beget, in the Passive Voice, to be born, is chiefly used of men begetting children...more rarely of women begetting children...It is used metaphorically...in the writings of the Apostle John, of the gracious act of God in conferring upon those who believe the nature and disposition of ‘children,’ imparting to them spiritual life”⁸]; A.T.R.’s mistake here is greater by far than on “believes” as he quotes Law in saying, “The Divine Begetting is the antecedent, not the consequent of the believing.”⁹ That places the new birth prior to faith. So one is regenerated or born again prior to believing in Jesus. So on this view one must be born again in order to believe. This shows that abject absurdity of reformed theology in this regard. And such it is. Where is this theology found in this verse? It *isn’t*.)

One might not have thought that such an expression as this would give rise to such consternation and controversy. On the other hand, the expression has also granted great peace to all who have taken it at face value. But what does this half of 1Jn. 5:1 actually say? It seems plain enough. John said, “Whoever (Πᾶς),” literally, “everyone who,” “believes (πιστεύων) that (ὅτι) Jesus (Ἰησοῦς) is the Christ (Χριστός) is born (γεγέννηται) of God.” Notice the illimitability of the term “whoever,” or “everyone who,” or “all who.” Whatever else one may say about that word, it is obvious that *nobody* can be excluded who meets the simple condition of the verse.

What is the condition? It is believing something. What does it mean to “believe (πιστεύων)”? According to Moulton’s *Analytical Greek Lexicon*, it is etymologically linked to the Greek word for persuade (πείθω, *peitho*). So it refers to that point when a person has been convinced that something is true. He stands persuaded, and so he believes it.

How does a person come to believe something? Does he simply *decide* to believe it? No, one comes to believe it based on having been convinced that it is true *from the evidence*. This was the case with Abraham in Rm. 4:19-22. So believing something is not merely a matter of the will, but a matter of persuasion. What role if any does the will play in believing? It comes in being “willing to do His will” (Jn. 7:17), which is a disposition to be persuaded when the evidence is presented. This is fundamentally a spiritual issue. The idea that “I’ve already got my mind made up, don’t confuse me with the facts,” will block access to the truth. Those stoning Stephen were unwilling to be persuaded when the evidence was presented. They could see where the evidence was taking them, and so they literally closed their ears against it (Acts 7:57-58). A similar case was Jerusalem in Jesus’ day. He said to its inhabitants, “How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling” (Mt. 23:37). They hardened themselves against the evidence, being unwilling to do His will, that is, they were unwilling to be persuaded. Far more encouraging is the example of the Bereans in Acts 17:11, who “were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, *to see* whether these things were so.” Ideally this is how the will is properly involved. That is, a person wants to know the truth, indicating a disposition to believe, and undertakes to discover it by examining the evidence of the Scriptures. Any such person will be convinced from the Scriptures of their veracity and, of course, of the truth of their most important message, the gospel of Jesus Christ, that is, of eternal life by faith in Him alone.

What is to be believed here? It is simply “that Jesus is the Christ.” Notice that it does not say “believe in Jesus as the Christ,” or even,

⁴Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

⁵Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

⁶Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

⁷Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

⁸Vine, W. E., *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

⁹Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

“believe in Jesus Christ.” It is simply the objective content “that (ὅτι) Jesus is the Christ,” that is, believe this objective fact, namely, “that Jesus is the Christ.” In the context of John’s refutation of his opponents, this has special meaning regarding both Jesus’ humanity, which is reflected in the name “Jesus,” and His deity, which is reflected in the expression, “the Christ.” Of course, His very human name “Jesus” meant Savior (Mt. 1:21). That He is also “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn. 1:29) suggests that as Savior He will die. If He is to die, He *must* also be a man. That is exactly what the OT says that He will be, while insisting that He is God too, which He must be if His death will suffice for the sins of the whole world: “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6). That He is the “Christ” means that He is “*the Anointed One, the Messiah,*”¹⁰ and certainly identifies Him as *God*. It includes the fact that the Messiah would be the offspring of David who would be anointed to rule on David’s throne (2Sam. 7:12-13, 16; Ps. 89:34-37; Lk. 1:32-33). So clearly this One who would rule would be the God-man. That is exactly John’s point here, though he reverses the order to man first and then God, that is, that Jesus, the man, is the Christ, God (cf. Jn. 20:30-31). Obviously this truth that Jesus is the God-man, makes Him unique. For *no* other man is like Him in this regard.

To recognize Him for who He is then, that is, to believe that Jesus is the Christ, “is” to be “born (γενένηται *perfect, passive, indicative*, lemma, γεννάω) of God.” What does it mean to be born of God? Vine says that John uses the concept “of the gracious act of God in conferring upon those who believe the nature and disposition of ‘children,’ imparting to them spiritual life.”¹¹ In its uses in physical contexts it is “chiefly used of men begetting children.”¹² In its spiritual contexts, it is used of God begetting spiritual children (cf. 1Jn. 5:1b, “and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him”). As we have noted before,

believers are not adopted into the family of God, but are *born* into it. At the point of the new birth, we are made alive spiritually. This life that we receive having believed the promise is eternal life (2:25). The testimony of God is that as believers He “has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (5:11b-12). To have the Son is indeed to have the life because the Son “is the true God and eternal life” (vs. 20b). This knowledge is certain to us based on the testimony of God’s word (vs. 13).

Many have observed this verse with wonderment at first only to have the whole thing collapse into despair. Why? It is simply because they let someone talk them into believing that it really isn’t that easy. But the truth is that it is the truth! This is a monumental statement placed before us in complete simplicity. The verse is saying that if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, that He is the God-man, that He is the unique source of life (4:9 “only begotten”), that He is the Savior of the world (4:14b), that He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (2:2), that He is the propitiation for our sins (5:1b), that He is the only Savior of sinners (5:12), which are all various ways of saying the same thing, you are “born of God.” You are a child of God, you have eternal life and you are definitely going to heaven when you die, and you are going to spend eternity with the Lord. You say, “I thought I had to believe *in* Jesus as my *personal* Savior in order to be saved, that it wasn’t enough to believe a set of facts, mere intellectual assent; I had to accept Him for myself, after having believed all those facts.” That is a great myth and one of the most pervasive in all of evangelical Christianity.

Evidently in John’s view there is no difference between believing *that* Jesus is the Christ and believing *in* Jesus. In other words, when John wrote, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16), there is no difference whatever in his mind between that and 1Jn. 5:1a, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,” none *whatsoever*.

It is impossible to believe that Jesus is the Christ and still be lost. Someone has said that this

¹⁰Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

¹¹Vine, W. E., *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

¹²Vine, W. E., *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

would make all Roman Catholics born again believers. It would not, because you cannot believe that Jesus is the Christ and hold that you still have to keep the seven sacraments in order to go to heaven when you die. Still more, the same applies to numerous so-called protestant groups who insist that believing in Jesus as the Christ must be accompanied by or followed up by a life of good works. Paul would call that a gospel of a different kind in Gal. 1, and such it is. Others not quite wanting to directly mention good works say, "Hence John insists on this form of faith (ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩΝ... here in the full sense, stronger than in 3:23; 4:16, seen also in ΠΙΣΤΙΣ... in verse 4, where English and Latin fall down in having to use another word for the verb) as he does in verse 5 and in accord with the purpose of John's Gospel (John 20:31). Nothing less will satisfy John, not merely intellectual conviction, but full surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour."¹³ Who on earth would see that kind of distinction in meaning based merely on a different *tense of the same verb*? Who on earth would see in 5:1a that, "Nothing less will satisfy John... but full surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour."¹⁴ "Surrender" is the same thing as "believes"? Yet perversions of faith abound. Similarly someone said that this is what the Philippian Jailer did in Acts 16:34, when he "believed in God," which according to them is to be understood "as primarily a religious commitment."¹⁵ "Commitment" is the same thing as "believes"? Then there are those who say that saving faith include good works, the position in fact of John MacArthur, but in reality it is a thoroughly Roman Catholic concept.¹⁶

The reality is that if any person believes at any time, not necessarily continuously, what is stated here, then it applies to him. That means that at the point in time a person comes to believe that Jesus is the Christ, that person is then in a permanent state of having been born of God. If believing has to be continuous, then a person could never be said to have been born of God

because one could not be sure that the individual would continue to believe. It really is that simple. Consequently such views destroy *completely* any hope of assurance.

Of course, such certainty as that which arises from the first half of 5:1 sets the only perfect environment for loving the Father in the second half, as we will further examine below. Spiritual children are naturally acclimated to love the Father who freely gave them their spiritual birth based on their believing "that Jesus is the Christ." That is the *only* proper order too, and not as that quoted from Law by A.T.R., "The Divine Begetting is the antecedent, not the consequent of the believing."¹⁷ *Nothing* could be further from the truth than that statement. In that view, faith is the result of having been born again. The new birth is an arbitrary act of God that has no relationship *at all* to the individual's faith. So one is born again in order to believe! Yet in the Bible one believes in order to be born again. According to Peter, one is "born again... through the living and abiding word of God" (1Pt. 1:23b), that is, one hears the word, believes the word, and then is born again. Our Lord spoke to Nicodemus about the necessity of the new birth in Jn. 3:3, which there is seen to be a work of the Spirit (3:5), and in Jn. 3:16 comes about because of believing in Jesus, "that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

B. The implications of the new birth for Christian love (5:1b-3)

1. (vs. 1b) No one can question the relationship of the new birth to loving the others born of God: "and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him" (καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν γεννήσαντα [*"beget...f ig. of the infl. exerted by one person on another... πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν γεννήσαντα ἀγαπᾷ τὸν γεγεννημένον ἔξ αὐτοῦ everyone who loves the father {=God} loves the child {=Christ or one's Christian brother}*]"¹⁸ ἀγαπᾷ [*"what was stated in 4:20, 21, is purposely put in the opposite way in this verse... Taken together, then, the two passages show that love to God and love to one another are essentially associated and mutually*

¹³Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

¹⁴Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

¹⁵Friberg, Timothy, Barbara Friberg and Neva F. Miller. *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*.

Baker's Greek New Testament library. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000. 314.

¹⁶<http://forums.catholic.com/showthread.php?t=241159&page=2>, "Protestants believe that good works are a fruit of your faith and demonstrate your faith and Catholics believe that a saving faith INCLUDES good works."

¹⁷Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

¹⁸Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

evidential.”¹⁹] [καὶ τὸν γεγεννημένον [“beget ...fig. of the infl. exerted by one person on another...Pass. ἐκ (τοῦ) θεοῦ γεννᾶσθαι”²⁰] ἐξ [“prep. w. gen...from, out of, away from...to denote origin, cause, motive, reason...in expr. which have to do w. begetting and birth from, of, by: ἐκ introduces the role of the male...also of the female”²¹] αὐτοῦ).

As was noted above, the new birth sets the perfect stage for loving God. It is not a foregone conclusion that the believer will love God. This verse does not say that. It simply says, “and whoever loves the Father (τὸν γεννήσαντα) loves the *child* born of Him.” Actually that is a paraphrase of the verse. It quite literally says, “Whoever loves the begetter loves the one who is begotten of Him.” But the paraphrase gives the correct sense.

To love the Father is to earnestly desire His will. To love those begotten of Him is to earnestly desire His will to be done in their lives. It is to love the one who believes whereby he was begotten or born of God (vs. 1a). John is reiterating *by focusing on and emphasizing the new birth* what he already said negatively in 4:20, and positively in 4:21. One cannot say that he loves God the Father, while hating the “the *child* born of Him” (5:1b). Believers are all members of the same family, the family of God. Therefore we ought all to love our Father *and* one another. Brotherly love, “does not spring from something lovable in the” brother “himself, but from his paternity.”²²

2. (vs. 2) What is the test for whether we love the children of God or not: “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments” (ἐν τούτῳ [“subst...In particular, the neut. is use...w. ref. to what follows, esp. before clauses that express a statement, purpose, result, or condition, which it introduces...W. a prep...ἐν τούτῳ, ὅταν”²³] γινώσκουμεν [“know,

come to know...w...ἐν τούτῳ”²⁴; “signifies to be taking in knowledge, to come to know, recognize, understand, or to understand completely”²⁵] ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν [“love, cherish...of affection for persons...by human beings...to persons; w. obj. given”²⁶] τὰ τέκνα [“child...fig...The believers are {τὰ} τέκνα {τοῦ} θεοῦ...in John as those begotten by God”²⁷] τοῦ θεοῦ ὅταν τὸν θεὸν ἀγαπῶμεν [“The love of God and the love of the brethren do in fact include each the other’ {Westcott}. Each is a test of the other.”²⁸] καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ ποιῶμεν [Here is another utterly absurd, reformed view on works in relationship to salvation: “Works are not in tension with salvation but are integrated into it. Love manifests itself in keeping the commandments”²⁹].

We know that we love God when we love His children (4:20-21; cf. 3:14). The opposite is true too. “By this,” namely, what comes ahead, “we know that we love the children of God,” that is again, those who are born of God and are fellow members of His family, “when we love God and observe (ποιῶμεν),” or simply do, “His commandments.” In addition to our verse, the Greek word for commandment has appeared eleven times in eight verses in this letter so far (2:3, 4, 7 [ter], 8; 3:22, 23 [bis], 24; 4:21) and will appear twice more in 5:5 here. What are His commandments? In 2:7 John’s reader were told that “the old commandment is the word which you have heard.” More specifically in 3:23 they were told, “And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another.” Finally in 4:21 this explanation followed, “And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.” It seems clear enough that theologically John emphasized the commandment “that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus

19Vine, W.E. Collected Writings of W.E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1996.

20Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

21Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

22Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

23Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

24Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

25Vine, W. E., *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

26Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

27Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

28Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

29Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

Christ,” and in practice that we “love one another,” just as we were told in 3:23. Believing in Jesus, both initially and as a way of life, makes it possible for us to know God. Knowing God brings the responsibility to keep His commandments (2:3, 4). His key commandment on the ground level is that we love one another. So John builds a kind of circle in which we are to believe in the name of Jesus as a way of life, and love God, and love one another. As far as the last to spokes in that wheel are concerned, “The love of God and the love of the brethren do in fact include each the other’ (Westcott). Each is a test of the other.”³⁰ In fact, the main barometer for checking how we are doing in the Christian life is the measure of the extent to which we love the children of God, those born of Him, our brothers and sisters in Christ. Note that the measure is *not* the extent to which we are being loved *by* them.

3. (vs. 3) John here tells us what it means to love God in connection with His commandments: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome” (αὕτη γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη [“love {an unquestioned example fr. a pagan source was lacking for a long time...}...of human love...expressly mentioned...God or Christ ἀ. τοῦ θεοῦ *love toward God* {but in many cases the gen. may be subjective}”³¹; “Christian love has God for its primary object, and expresses itself first of all in implicit obedience to His commandments”³² τοῦ θεοῦ [“objective, signifying our love to God.”³³; “objective sense”³⁴ ἵνα [“Very oft. the final mng. is greatly weakened or disappears altogether. In this case the ἵνα—constr. serves...as a substitute for an inf. that supplements a verb, or an acc. w. inf... ἵνα can also take the place of the explanatory inf. after a demonstrative...This is a favorite usage in J”³⁵; “*Substantival Ἰνα Clause {a.k.a. Sub-Final Clause}*...As with ὅτι plus the indicative, ἵνα plus

the subjunctive can be used substantivally. There are four basic uses: subject, predicate nominative, direct object, and apposition...None is especially frequent...Apposition Clause...The force of the appositional ἵνα is *namely, that*. Although not frequent, it is almost idiomatic of Johannine literature.”³⁶; “Explanatory use of ἵνα...with αὕτη...to show what ‘the love of God’...in the objective sense is, not mere declamatory boasting...but obedience to God’s commands”³⁷ τὰς ἐντολάς [“denotes heavy, burdensome; it is always used metaphorically in the N.T...negatively of God’s commandments”³⁸; “The *entolai* are always related to the one *entolé* of love...True understanding of love for God must be opposed to mystical union, and love of God must be strictly related to love of the brethren...Also aimed at Gnosticism is the relating of faith and the *entolé* {1 Jn. 3:23} and the insistence that the commandments are not grievous {5:3}. The law does not pose a problem, as in Paul, for the *entolé* is bound up with faith and the battle is against antinomian

Gnosticism.”³⁹ αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν [“keep, observe, fulfill, pay attention to, esp. of law and teaching {LXX} τὶ someth...τὰς ἐντολάς”⁴⁰] καὶ αἱ ἐντολαὶ αὐτοῦ βαρεῖαι [“pertaining to that which is difficult in view of its being burdensome - ‘burdensome, troublous.’...‘and his commandments are not burdensome’...In rendering ‘his commandments are not burdensome,’ it may be necessary in some languages to translate ‘it is not difficult to do what he has commanded.”⁴¹; “heavy...fig...burdensome, difficult to fulfill of regulations, demands”⁴²; “This is parallel to *báros*, being used for ‘heavy,’ ‘deep {in tone},’ then ‘forceful,’ then ‘mature,’ and finally ‘oppressive’ and ‘significant.’ The sense ‘oppressive’ is most important in the NT, especially in relation to the law...In 1 Jn. 5:3 we are told in contrast that

30Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

31Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

32Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

33Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

34Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software) 1999, c1996.

35Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

36Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software) 1999, c1996.

37Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

38Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

39Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

40Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

41Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene A., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies) 1988, 1989.

42Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

Christ's commandments are not demanding or burdensome, not so much in the sense that they do not ask too much, but rather in the sense that in keeping them we can draw on Christ's perfect triumph."⁴³] οὐκ εἰσίν).

This verse builds on the last by offering an explanation for it. "For (γάρ) this is the love of God (θεοῦ obj. gen.), that we keep His commandments," that is, John explained "this, namely, that we keep His commandments, is the love of God." Loving God and keeping His commandments are synonymous. They are part and parcel of the same thing. So the way we show our love for God is to do what He tells us to do. What does He command us to do? In this letter, beyond believing in Jesus, it can be summed up in one expression, to love the brethren, those born of Him. This is not a matter of emotion and feelings, but of actually *doing* something in behalf of our brothers (3:16-18). So to love God is in fact to love His people. Again "The love of God and the love of the brethren do in fact include each the other" (Westcott). Each is a test of the other."⁴⁴ Do you love God? Well, do you love His children? Then you love God. Do you love the children of God? Well, do you love God by keeping His commandments? Then surely you love the children of God as well. The circle is connected and completed. Let us keep it that way!

Here is good news: "His commandments are not burdensome (βαρεῖαι)," that is, not "difficult to fulfill"⁴⁵ or "oppressive."⁴⁶ Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light" (Mt. 11:29-30). The scribes and the Pharisees on the other hand had the opposite practice: "And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with *so much as a finger*" (23:4). That is the way of the legalist and legalism, which was exactly the practice of the Essene friendly proto-Gnostics and antichrists of John's day. The way of Christ and

the new covenant is liberty and the power to do right rising up from within by the means of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Believers are therefore at liberty to continue to believe in Jesus and love the brethren as He commanded us (1Jn. 3:23). This is not too much to ask, it is not a hassle; rather it is our joy to do so.

B. Faith resulting in the new birth is victory over the world (5:4-5).

1. (vs. 4) People who have been born again on the basis of believing in Jesus, positionally have already overcome the world: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (ὅτι πᾶν ["adj., used w. a noun...w. a noun in the sing., w. the art...Oft. πᾶς ὁ, πᾶσα ἡ, πᾶν τό is used w. a ptc...πᾶν τό *everything that...πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον*"⁴⁷; "without a noun, every one, everything, every man...with a participle and the article, equivalent to a relative clause, everyone who...rendered 'whosoever.' So in the neuter...often rendered 'whatsoever'"⁴⁸; "Collective use of the neuter singular, classic idiom"⁴⁹ τὸ γεγεννημένον ["*beget...fig. of the infl. exerted by one person on another...Pass. ἐκ {τοῦ} θεοῦ γεννᾶσθαι*"⁵⁰; "This birth results in...in overcoming the world"⁵¹; "Neuter singular perfect passive participle of γενναω...rather than the masculine singular {verse 1} to express sharply the universality of the principle {Rothe}"⁵² ἐκ ["*from, out of, away from...to denote origin, cause, motive, reason...in expr. which have to do w. begetting and birth from, of, by: ἐκ introduces the role of the male...also of the female...γεννᾶσθαι ἐκ τ. θεοῦ*"⁵³ τοῦ θεοῦ ["q uite predom. of the true God, somet. with, somet. without the art...ὁ θεός...With prep...ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ"⁵⁴ νικᾷ ["*to win a victory over - 'to be victorious over, to be a victor, to*

43Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.
44Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.
45Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.
46Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

47Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.
48Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.
49Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.
50Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.
51Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.
52Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.
53Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.
54Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

conquer, victory.’...‘every child of God is victorious over the world’...‘the world’ must be understood in terms of the value system of the world.”⁵⁵] τὸν κόσμον [“the world, and everything that belongs to it, appears as that which is hostile to God, i.e. lost in sin, wholly at odds w. anything divine, ruined and depraved...Neither Christ himself...nor his own...belong in any way to the ‘world’. Rather Christ has chosen them ‘out of the world’...even though for the present they must still live ‘in the world’...All the trouble that they must undergo because of this...means nothing compared w. the victorious conviction that Christ {and the believers w. him} has overcome ‘the world’”⁵⁶; “Salvation history is a struggle between Christ and the cosmos, or the evil one who rules it...Christ is victorious in this conflict...Believers are elected out of the cosmos...In them the cosmos is to see that the Father in love has sent the Son...The cosmos will turn its hatred on them...But they will overcome the cosmos”⁵⁷] καὶ αὕτη [“demonstrative pron., used as adj. and subst.: *this*, referring to someth. comparatively near at hand, just as ἐκεῖνος refers to someth. comparatively farther away...subst...gener...w. ref. to what follows: w. a relative foll...W. subst. foll.”⁵⁸] ἐστὶν ἡ νίκη [“to win a victory over - ‘to be victorious over, to be a victor, to conquer, victory.’...‘this is how we win the victory over the world: with our faith’”⁵⁹; “*victory*, then as abstr. for concr. *the means for winning a victory* {but cf. also the custom of speaking of the emperor’s νίκη as the power that grants him the victory}”⁶⁰; “Faith is dominant in Paul, victory in John, faith is victory”⁶¹] ἡ νικήσασα [“trans. *conquer, overcome, vanquish*...act. w. the obj. in the acc. τινά *overcome someone*...Of Christ νενίκηκα τὸν κόσμον *I have overcome the world* {i.e. the sum total of everything opposed to God...}...Also said of the

Christians”⁶²] τὸν κόσμον ἡ πίστις [“*trust, confidence, faith* in the active sense=‘believing’, in relig. usage...πίστις is found mostly without an obj., *faith*...as true piety, genuine religion...which for our lit. means being a Christian”⁶³; “πίστις is not found in the gospel at all, and occurs in 1 J only once”⁶⁴; “The noun *pístis* occurs only in 1 Jn. 5:4, but the verb is common in John, and often denotes acceptance of the message, whether with *hóti* clauses, with *eis*, or in the absolute.”⁶⁵; “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ...so common in Paul, John uses only in 1 John 5:4 and four times in the Apocalypse where ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩ...does not occur at all.”⁶⁶] ἡμῶν).

As with the previous verse, this one offer explanation for the preceding one. John had just said, “and His commandments are not burdensome.” Why are they not burdensome? It is “because (ὅτι) or “For (NASB),” “whatever is born (γεγεννημένον *perfect, passive, participle*) of God,” that is, “whatever stands in the current state of having been born of God, “overcomes (νικᾷ, lemma, νικάω) the world.” Why did John say “whatever” instead of “whoever” as in vs. 1? We know that persons are in view, since things are not born of God as such. Lexicographers say that John used the impersonal form “to express sharply the universality of the principle,”⁶⁷ and when so expressed the term is “often rendered ‘whatsoever.’”⁶⁸ So the reference is to the totality of believers who having been born of God overcome the world or have the victory over the world. Does this mean that every believer in practice overcomes the world? No, see Demas who “loved this present world” and forsook Paul having “gone to Thessalonica” (2Tm. 4:10). John is saying that believers having been born of God have His seed in them (1Jn. 3:9), and are thus positionally equipped for victory. Nothing can overcome them in this regard, as long as that seed is the controlling dynamic in their lives and “abides in” them (3:9). If a believer loves the

55Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene A., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies) 1988, 1989.

56Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

57Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

58Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

59Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene A., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies) 1988, 1989.

60Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

61Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

62Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

63Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

64Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

65Kittel, Gerhard, and Friedrich, Gerhard, Editors, *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) 1985.

66Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

67Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

68Vine, W. E., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell) 1981.

world then the love of the Father is not in him in that it is not the controlling dynamic or power in his life (2:15).

Now what is the world? It is the complex of forces and attributes arising out of the conglomerate of unsaved mankind. This world “everything that belongs to it, appears as that which is hostile to God, i.e. lost in sin, wholly at odds w. anything divine, ruined and depraved.”⁶⁹ The world is summed up by John as “the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life” (2:16). These forces are diametrically opposite of God’s will, of His commandment to believers to love one another. If we had to labor in our own meager strength to love the brethren in keeping this commandment of God, it would get “burdensome,” becoming an exhausting, wearying, impossible weight on our shoulders. But since we have inner, empowering, spiritual life from God because of the new birth, having been born of God, such is not the case. We are not defeated, instead we overcome the world in loving our brothers and sisters in Christ.

At bottom then “this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith (πίστις).” The NKJV says “your faith,” but this makes little difference in meaning. (“But the evidence of the MajT is divided here and the original reading is uncertain.”⁷⁰) This is the only time in the gospel or the letters that John uses the noun faith. (He does use it four times in Revelation.) He uses the verb believe in its various forms 107 times, but none in Revelation. Nevertheless believe and faith are synonyms. And faith here simply means to take God at this word, to believe His word. At the initial moment of saving faith, the victory was instantaneously ours, as the aorist suggests, or at least allows. It still is too, especially as we continue to live by faith, something to which the next verse points.

2. (vs. 5) The subsection concludes with a rhetorical question: “And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God” (Τίς [“interrogative pron. in direct, indirect and rhetorical questions...who? which {one}?”

what?...subst...τίς...who? which one?...Esp. in questions to which the answer ‘nobody’ is expected...Likew. τίς. . . εἰ μή; who. . . except {for}, but?”⁷¹; “Not a mere rhetorical question...but an appeal to experience and fact.”⁷²] [δέ] ἔστιν ὁ νικῶν τὸν κόσμον εἰ μὴ ὁ πιστεύων [What was said about Wallace’s comment on continually believing vs. 1 applies here as well.] ὅτι Ἰησοῦς [“in most clear passages, the proper name is the S, regardless of word order {cf. the formulaic construction in 1 John 2:22; 4:15; 5:1; 5:5}”⁷³] ἔστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ).

One can immediately see the present tense emphasis here in contrast to the past tense emphasis of the previous. The question is not, “And who is the one who has overcome the world.” Rather it is, “And who is the one who overcomes the world” now? Who is the person who is right now enjoying in his daily experience victory over the world, that is, who is defeating or conquering the world in its attempts to take him captive in defeat so that he no longer obey God’s commandments, the emphasis of which is to love the children of God? The answer is no one, “but (εἰ μὴ),” or except, “he who believes,” not *has* believed, “that Jesus is the Son of God.” Go back to verse one for further explanation on what it means to believe that Jesus is the Christ in which material we said that the vs. 1 expression is a synonym for this one, just as it is for 3:23, “believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.” Believers who maintain a sound Christology without compromising either the humanity or deity of Christ will have victory over the world because the world is opposed to those essential truths. If a Christ eviscerated of either His humanity or His deity cannot save you in the first place, then such a Christ cannot give you the victory in the Christian life either. A believer who has compromised in this critical area will not be able to keep His commandments to love the children of God either.

III Conclusion

⁶⁹Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.
⁷⁰Hodges, Zane C., *The Epistles of John* (Grace Evangelical Society, Irving, Texas, 1999) p. 216.

⁷¹Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

⁷²Robertson, Archibald Thomas, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, (Nashville, Tennessee, USA: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention) 1998, c1933.

⁷³Wallace, Daniel B., *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics - Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, (Garland, TX: Galaxie Software) 1999, c1996.

We have seen the utter simplicity of salvation here, or as Dr. Constable put it, “one of the clearest statements in Scripture of what a person has to believe to be saved”⁷⁴: “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” As a member of the family of God, the most natural thing to do is to love “the Father” and “the *child* born of Him” (vs. 1). Loving God and observing His commandments shows that we love His children (vs. 2). This is true because to love God is to keep His commandments, which are not burdensome (vs. 3). His commandments are fundamentally two in 1Jn., to love His children and to believe in Jesus as a way of life. We have everything in us that is necessary to keep His commandments having been “born of God,” all of which came about, giving us victory over the world, by “our faith” (vs. 4). Present victory is enjoyed by continuing to believe “that Jesus is the Son of God” (vs. 5). Are you enjoying the victory? If so, you will be loving God children while continuing to maintain a sound Christology.

⁷⁴Tom Constable. Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible. Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003. 1 Jn 5:1.