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A0451 -- Dec. 19, 2004 – 1 John 5:7-12 – God’s Testimony

Last week, we looked at 1 John 5:3b-6. In verse 3, the sentence ends in the middle of the verse. Rather than having a comma there, you should have a full stop, and the beginning of the next sentence should read: **And His commandments are not burdensome**; verse 4 should begin with, **because** rather than “for.” **His commandments are not burdensome because whatever is born of God overcomes the world.** The way we have **overcome the world** is by **our faith**. In other words, to become a Christian is to become a world conqueror. The way you became a world conqueror was by faith that **Jesus is the Son of God**. Sure, everyone has faith in something but the only ones who are world-conquerors are those who have faith that **Jesus as the Son of God**. That is the content that someone must believe in order to become a Christian. And what does it mean that **Jesus is the Son of God**? It means that Jesus is the heir of God which makes Him equal to God or simply put, God Himself. One must believe that Jesus is God if he is to become a genuine Christian. So, the way to become a world conqueror--a Christian--is to have faith that **Jesus is the Son of God**.

The reason **His commandments are not burdensome** is **because** we already know the way of victory. The way of victory is by **our faith**. We were saved by faith, and in order to obey His commandments we must live by faith. **Faith** is the weapon that overcomes the world at the point of salvation, and it is the weapon that continues to overcome the schemes of the world after salvation. No Christian has ever been sanctified by works and no Christian ever will be sanctified by works. Sanctification occurs by living a life of faith. This is why Paul said in Galatians 2:20, *“It is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me, the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.”* Christ lives in Christians; and therefore, to live in the flesh now you must live by faith. Trying to be sanctified by works will lead to a very hard life. Christians who think the commandments of God are burdensome have never learned that their responsibility is to live by faith so that God can work the commandments through them. It is Christ who lives through you as you live by faith. That is what John is talking about here.

Now, who is Jesus, the Son of God? Verse 6 says He is the **One who came by water and blood**. He **came by water** means that His earthly ministry formally began at His water baptism by John, God's ordained priest. Jesus was being inducted into His High Priestly office at His baptism. Second, Jesus came by **blood**. This refers to His death on the cross. These two events stand as historic witnesses that Jesus is the Son of God; that is, that Jesus is God himself. We might say these constitute evidences that Jesus is God. We will talk about the use of evidences in apologetic encounters with unbelievers here in a moment but that is what John is trying to communicate here. He is trying to nail down, against these false teachers, that **Jesus is the Son of God**, that His earthly ministry began at His water baptism and ended at His death on the cross.

He did not come only by water **but with water and with blood**. John adds this because the antichrists, the false teachers of the day, were teaching that Jesus was a mere human, that He was baptized, and that the Christ, who they identified with the Spirit, came upon the man Jesus at His baptism but departed before His death. This would destroy the plan of salvation, so John makes sure that he locks down who this Jesus was. You can see how important it is to get the right Jesus. Salvation is in Jesus but only the right Jesus. If you mess with either the deity or humanity of Christ then you just destroyed the plan of salvation. Jesus must be 100 percent God and 100 percent man if there is to be any salvation for anyone, anywhere, anytime.

Finally, John gives us a third witness, this is a living witness, **it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is truth**. Last week, I briefly, went over the question of "what is truth," so let's review that again. There are several theories of truth (correspondence theory, coherence theory, pragmatic theory, semantic theory, and performative theory) but, for the most part, the average person accepts what is called relative truth, that is, "whatever is true for you may not be true for me. You have your truth and I have my truth." This is because the world thinks that the individual or corporate humanity determines what truth is. The dictionary definition of true is that it is "a proposition that accords with the actual state of affairs, conforms to reality, or is correct." But the Christian notion of truth is actually much more than this (although it does include this). Essentially, Christianity defines truth as something that "conforms to the mind of God" (cf. Ps. 111:7-8; John 14:6; 16:13). Thus, the Bible applies the term not only to the facts (Deut. 17:4; Eph. 4:25)—since they are all predetermined by the mind of God (Eph. 1:11; Isa. 46:9-11; Matt. 10:29-30)—but also to what is eternal and absolute (e.g., John 6:3, 35; 15:1; Heb. 8:2), as well as to what is ethically right or wrong (e.g., Ps. 26:3; John 3:21; 2 John 4).²¹ God's Word, which reflects God's mind, is not contradictory. Propositions that correspond to God's mind, therefore,

always cohere with one another. Since the Spirit is God, then the **Spirit is truth**. His witness can be trusted absolutely. Whether we trust it or not does not change the fact that it is absolutely true.

Greek Text 5:7-8 hoti treis eisin oi marturountes, [en to ourano, ho pater, ho logos, kai Agion Pneuma. kai outoi oi treis en eisin **5:8** kai treis eisin oi marturountes en te ge] **to pneuma kai to udor kai to aima, kai oi treis eis to en eisin.**

Translation 5:7-8 For there are three witnesses [in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. And these three agree [lit. in one]. 5:8 and there are three witnesses on earth] the Spirit and the water and the blood, and the three agree as one [lit. are into the one].

In most versions, verse 7 simply affirms that **there are three witnesses** that Jesus is the Son of God, and verse 8 lists those three witnesses as **the Spirit and the water and the blood**. However, before we get to that let's deal briefly with verses 7-8 because these verses are famous verses due to a large addition in some manuscripts known as the Johannine Comma. On the insert in your bulletin, I have put the Johannine Comma in brackets so you'll want to refer to that now. It begins in v.7 and extends into v.8. Or, if you have the KJV, then you have the Comma in your text. If you have a KJV, then you will notice that verses 7-8 are quite a bit longer than everyone else's. If the Comma is added, vv. 7-8 would read (as in your bulletin): "**For there are three witnesses [in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. And these three agree. And there are three witnesses on earth] the Spirit and the water and the blood, and the three agree as one.** You can tell there is a large difference between this reading and other versions. That large addition between the brackets and in italics is what is known as the Johannine Comma. The Johannine Comma begins in v. 7 with the words **in heaven** and end in v. 8 with the words **on earth**. If you have a KJV you want to put brackets around that section to mark them off [**in heaven....on earth**], just like in your bulletin.

The story of the Johannine Comma is well-known. If you know much about the history of how we got our English Bible, then you know that during the Middle Ages (about 325AD-1517AD) the only Bible was the Latin Bible (Vulgate, 1) original intent, 2) later abuse, 3) Latin a scholar's language). Well, in the early 1500s, a man named Erasmus, a 16th century Greek scholar, a brilliant man, started compiling Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. He published his first two, complete New Testament Greek manuscripts in 1516 and 1519. (These were the basis of Luther's German Bible; 11 weeks to translate the entire New Testament. Luther was more influential of the German language than the KJV was of the English language, which was 83% pure William Tyndale). Neither of these manuscripts

contained the Johannine Comma. However, an Englishman named Lee criticized Erasmus for leaving out the Johannine Comma. Erasmus said he could not include it because it was not in any of the Greek manuscripts he possessed. Lee showed him a manuscript called the Codex Montfortianus which did contain the Johannine Comma. Montfortianus was a Greek manuscript that was based on an earlier codex #326, which did not contain the Johannine Comma. Therefore, a scribe added the words in the Greek. Nevertheless, Erasmus, not knowing all that we know today and under ecclesiastical pressure from the Roman Church, added the Johannine Comma to his third (1522), fourth (1527), and fifth (1535) editions of his Greek NT. Because Erasmus' Greek text was the basis of most of the following Greek manuscripts, they, too, had the Johannine Comma. The reason the Comma is in the KJV is because the Greek text underlying the KJV (Textus Receptus) was based on Beza's fifth edition Greek text of 1598, which was firmly rooted in Erasmus' later editions of the Greek text, and therefore contained the Johannine Comma. So, when the KJV was first published in 1611 it, of course, contained the Comma. However, the overwhelming majority of manuscripts do not contain this section. It does not appear in any Greek manuscript before the early 16th century (although it has been found as an alternate reading in the margins of some texts as early as the 12th century). It is therefore not to be included in our text. You can see why these words are so controversial. The KJV reads, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." They would give an explicit text definition of the Trinity. Nevertheless, very few scholars have tried to defend this reading because the manuscript evidence is so late and so poor. Almost everyone recognizes this as a scribal addition.

In conclusion, verses 7-8 are really quite simple. They designate three witnesses that Jesus is the Son of God. To be the Son of God is to be God Himself. Two witnesses to Jesus' full deity are historic events signified by **water** = His baptism and **blood** = His death. The third witness to Jesus' full deity is a living person, the Holy Spirit, who is God Himself.

These are three witnesses, or we might say evidences, that Jesus is the Son of God. However, we cannot leave the framework of Scripture if we want to use these two historic events to prove that Jesus is the Son of God. In other words, as Christians we cannot use these two events as evidence that Jesus is God if we isolate them from their greater historical context. These two historic events cannot stand on their own as abstractions. An unbeliever might say, "So what? A man was baptized. Lots of men were baptized in the ancient world. What makes Jesus any different? Lots of men died on crosses, too, under the Roman government. What makes Jesus' death on a cross any more meaningful?" Do you see how unbelievers can handle evidences if you just present them outside of the Scriptural framework? Unbelievers will give events meaning or significance based on their

own judgment and in terms of their depravity and hate for God. So, these events, if you use them as evidence, must be presented as evidence within the overall plan of God revealed in Scripture. God is the one who gives meaning and significance to Christ's baptism and death. We do not give meaning or interpretation to events. God gives meaning and interpretation to events. So, if you are speaking to an unbeliever, you want to be very up front about what you believe. You want to show them the worldview of Scripture so that these historic evidences cannot have just any meaning but must have God's meaning, or else all meaning and significance of any and all events past, present and future is destroyed. You have to show the unbeliever that God is the Creator of the world, that man fell under sin, and that God providentially controls history, every circumstance and consequence. You have to show how God provided an answer for the sin problem, and that answer was born in Bethlehem of a virgin, revealed as the Messiah after His baptism by John, consummated at the cross, and resurrected from the dead. If we present a God who created the universe out of nothing, and this God sustains the entire universe, then Jesus' virgin birth, baptism, death, and resurrection make sense. What is or is not possible in this kind of universe is defined by God. Possibility is not back of God. The unbeliever does not like what all this points to. He likes a worldview where he is safe from God, one where possibility is back of God so that the universe is really just run by Chance. In this kind of world, he feels safe from an all-controlling God. But the problem with this is that a Chance universe results in chaos and destruction of all knowledge. You have to point this out to him so that he sees the weight of his dilemma as one who is at enmity with God. If what he was saying were true, then no knowledge of anything would be possible. You have to demonstrate that on non-Christian presuppositions all rationality is destroyed. We say that only Christianity does not slay reason on the altar of Chance. So, when you, as a Christian, try to use historic evidences such as the baptism and death of Christ to prove His deity, then you have to present them within the Scriptural framework. These two events only have meaning within the Scriptural framework. This means that they only prove that Jesus is the Son of God when seen in the greater light of the rest of Scripture. In other words, let's suppose we did not have the word of God, but we did have these two events, His baptism and His death. What would they prove? Would they prove that Jesus is God? No, they would be meaningless events. These two events find their meaning in the overall context of Scripture and nowhere else! Understanding how this works and how the carnal mind is at enmity with God is very important for understanding what follows. Give example of Acts 2, Acts 14. Also remember that God's audible voice came from heaven declaring Who Jesus Christ was after His baptism by John (1 John 1:32-34). Revelation from an omniscient personal God is essential to true knowledge.

John says in v. 8 **and the three are in agreement**. All three testify that Jesus is the Son of God and that is because God is the interpreter of the significance of these events. Being omniscient, He knows all things. He knows what a true witness is and a false witness. He knows what reality is and what the significance and place of everything in reality really is.

Greek Text 5:9 ei ten marturian ton anthropon lambanomen, he marturia tou theou meizon estin; hoti aute estin he marturia tou theou hoti memartureken peri ou huiou autou.

Translation 5:9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God, that He testified of His Son.

In v. 9, John argues from the lesser to the greater. Sometimes the authors of the New Testament argue from the greater to the lesser (e.g., Matt. 6:30; Lk. 12:28; Rom. 5:10, 15). If the greater thing is true, then the lesser is also included in the greater. But here, John employs an argument from the lesser to the greater. If we receive the historical **testimony of men** regarding the water and the blood, then how much more should we receive the **testimony of God**? If we receive John the Baptists witness of Jesus' baptism and that Jesus was the Son of God (John 1:32-24), and if we receive the many witnesses of Christ's death and resurrection, then how much greater is the **testimony of God** Himself? We, as believers, do accept the testimony of John the Baptist and those who saw the death and resurrection of Christ. And we do so on the basis of the fact that there were many witnesses to these events. But there is a greater testimony than these human witnesses, and that is the **testimony of God**.

What is the testimony? The actual testimony is found in vv. 11-12. Verse 10 is really a parenthetical verse. You might put verse 10 in parentheses to help you see better see the flow of John's argument. Let's read vv.9-12 and we'll skip v. 10 so you can see this more clearly:

If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son...¹¹ And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

See how that flows nicely? It shows that the testimony is two-fold: 1) **that God has given us eternal life**, and 2) **this life is in His Son**. But before we get to the witness in vv. 11-12, let's look at the parenthetical verse 10.

Greek Text 5:10 ho pisteuon eis ton huion tou theou ekei ten marturian en eauto, ho me pisteuon to theo pseusten pepoiken auton, hoti ou pepisteuken eis ten marturian hen memartureken o theos peri tou huiou autou.

Translation 5:10 He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself, he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has testified concerning His Son.

In this verse, John contrasts between the one who believes in the Son of God and the one who does not believe in the Son of God. The one who **believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself**, but the one **who does not believe** the testimony of **God**, for all intents and purposes, makes God out to be **a liar**. What this means is that all unbelievers, without exception, must make themselves out to be the truth. Jesus stated in John 14:6, “*I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life.*” Unbelievers amount to saying, “No, no Jesus, I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life.” If we are each, as individuals, the sources of truth and we often disagree on fundamental ideas, then we cannot each be the truth. But this is what unbeliever’s amount to saying about themselves. They think they are the standard of truth either individually or collectively. Like C.S. Lewis said, in the courtroom the unbeliever supposes that Man is on the bench and god is in the dock. God may even be acquitted; but the all-important thing is that Man is on the bench and god is in the dock. What C.S. Lewis was trying to communicate was that unbelieving autonomous man thinks that he himself is the source of truth. Everything that comes before him, every idea, must pass Man’s judgment to be accepted or rejected. We are the creators of truth. But the word of God says that God is truth. He sits on the bench and man is in the dock. Believe God’s words and you will be saved. Reject God’s words and you’ll be damned. Not believing the testimony of God is to call God a liar.

Two notes on this verse. First, notice that this verse says **he who believes IN the Son of God**, whereas 5:1 said **He who believes THAT Jesus is the Christ**. One says **believes in** the other says **believe that**. It is important to affirm that in the Greek these have the same force, there is no real significant difference. Some people have tried to say that **believe in**, particularly when it was in the aorist tense, signifies spurious faith, mere intellectual assent, but not true saving faith (e.g., John 2:23, 8:30; 12:42, et. al.). This is absurd. To **believe IN the Son of God** is equivalent to **believing THAT Jesus is the Christ**.

Second, notice what the verse does *not* say. The verse does not say that one who rejects the human testimonies of the water (baptism) and blood (death) makes God out to be a liar. It only says that the one who rejects God’s testimony, which is greater than the testimony of

men, makes God out to be a liar. In the end, the real question for an unbeliever is, “What do you do with God’s testimony concerning His Son?”

The actual testimony that is within us if we believe God’s testimony regarding His Son is given in vv. 11-12, which are best understood as a unit.

Greek Text 5:11 kai aute estin he marturia, hoti zoen aionion edoken hemin ho theos, kai aute he zoe en to huio autou estin. 5:12 ho ekon ton huion ekei ten zoen. ho me ekon ton huion tou theou ten zoen ouk ekei.

Translation 5:11 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 5:12 He who has the Son has the life, he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

Remember, v. 10 was a parenthesis and John is picking up where he left off in v. 9. He resumes by giving us **the testimony**. The **testimony** is two-fold: 1) **that God gave us eternal life**, and 2) **this life is in His Son**. Therefore, it logically follows that if you have **the Son**, you have **the life**; and if you do **not have the Son of God**, then you do **not have the life**. Throughout this verse, **life** refers to **eternal life**.

What is **eternal life**? **Eternal life** is a divine quality of life characterized by close intimate fellowship with God that results in joy. There are two aspect to the doctrine of eternal life. 1) *Possession* of **eternal life**, that is what this verse is talking about. If you possess the Son, then you possess eternal life. The moment you believed the testimony of God about His Son, that Jesus is the Son of God, you received the gift of eternal life. However, there is a second aspect to the doctrine of eternal life that is not often mentioned. 2) *Enjoyment* of **eternal life**. Just because we possess **eternal life** does not mean that we always enjoy **eternal life** while we still live in the flesh. We can abide or not abide in eternal life (**1 John 3:15**) or as Paul puts it, we must “take hold of eternal life” (**1 Tim. 6:12**) if we want to enjoy that quality of life. Remember, **eternal life** is a divine quality of life characterized by close intimate fellowship with God. And a Christian can either enjoy that quality of life or not. When we are out of this flesh, at physical death or the rapture, then we will continually *enjoy* eternal life. There will be no break of fellowship.

On the other hand, those who do **not have the Son of God do not have eternal life**. What unbelievers possess is what we call **eternal death**. Eternal death is a quality of life totally separate from God. They will have a new body which can feel pain and torment but cannot die and this is, unfortunately for them, their quality of life for all eternity. **Eternal death** is not a pretty picture. It is beyond any kind of human torment or suffering imaginable.

ⁱ Bahnsen, Greg, *Van Til's Apologetic* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1998), 163.

[Back To The Top](#)

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