

# TRUTH COMMUNITY

- TEACHING GOD'S PEOPLE GOD'S WORD -

## **The Plight of Man and the Power of God**

1 John 5:1

GraceLife: 5/22/2011

© 2011 by Don Green. All rights reserved.

Turn to 1 John which is where we are going to go if you want to turn there. Before we do, just to kind of set the context, I want to remind you of what the apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 because it kind of frames what we need to consider here this morning. Paul said:

*Momentary life affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Part of that challenge of living the Christian life is that the things that we see and that we experience distract us from the things that are unseen that actually frame reality for us and those things tend to discourage us. Without looking at names or making eye contacts, knowing that some of the relational difficulties and financial difficulties and health difficulties that many of you are going through, I realize that things that are seen press on your mind heavily and diminish perhaps your experience and the joy of your salvation.

Well, the way that we conquer that, the way that we overcome that is not by manipulating circumstances or waiting for circumstances to change so that we can be satisfied because things may not change, of course, things may not get better, they might get worse as you know. The key for us is to return to first principles that help us persevere. The key is to return to those things which are not seen, those things which are eternal, those things that deal with the matter of the state of our eternal soul.

The apostle John wrote to encourage believers, he wrote to promote their joy, 1 John 1:4. He wrote to promote their holiness, their sanctification, 1 John 2:1. He wrote to promote their assurance of salvation—all of those unseen matters, those things that do not relate to the temporal world. But those believers to whom he wrote needed encouragement because they were living in the midst of a hostile world that was opposed to Christ, that was opposed to Christianity and was opposed to Christians. And it was the time of difficulty and trouble as they were under the influence and the difficulty of false teachers that were distracting them away from the purity and simplicity of devotion to Christ. And even though John was writing over 2000 years ago, it should not surprise us that what he said then are the same things that help us now and it should not surprise you beloved. It should not surprise you at all when you encounter serious, severe challenges that discourage you. This world is not your home, this world is not

where the focus of our hope and our affections lie, it is not where the best of salvation is to occur. The promise of God in salvation, the thing that we have to go back to is that you overcome this world in the end. It is the outcome that should frame your disposition. It is the outcome that should be the foundation of your joy. It is the outcome that John points us to in the first 4 verses of chapter 5. Look at 1 John, chapter 5 with me, I will read this text with you. I am very encouraged and excited about what the Lord has for us from His word here this morning. 1 John 5:1-4 where John says under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. And whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments and His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.*

We are going to take two weeks to look at this passage. Basically I want to look at the bookends of the beginning of verse 1 and the conclusion of verse 4 here this morning to kind of set the context. But at its most basic level, what this passage is saying to you and me this morning is that we will and we do and we are triumphing over the world because God is the power behind salvation. That is the most basic principle to take out of this passage is that God Himself is the power behind your salvation, God is the one who planned it, God is the one who initiated it, God is the one who brought you to saving faith in Christ and it was His power that did that. And because salvation is rooted in the work and the purpose and the power of God, if you are a true Christian here this morning, it is a guaranteed certainty that He will complete that salvation in the end, He will bring you to glory, it will be fully accomplished. And in order to appreciate that power, in order to get the full impact of what that means, you have to appreciate what it is that God has overcome in order to bring you in to salvation. And so I have titled this message this morning “The Plight of Man and the Power of God”.

You will only fully appreciate the power of God if you understand more fully the plight from which He has delivered you. And so there is two basic points this morning:

### **1. The Plight of Man in Sin**

The plight of man in sin—this is a description of you before you came to Christ. This is a description of you now if you are not in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you have not repented and believed in Christ for salvation—the plight of man in sin.

Now, it is easy to think well, sinners are going to receive judgment, but it is so much more than that beloved. There is so much about unseen principles that scripture reveals to us to understand how desperately bad the situation is. Man is in a miserable plight, a miserable condition apart from Christ. The misery, the desperate straight that man is in cannot be fully described by words, but we will give it a shot with the help of the scriptures.

Man is headed for judgment, eternal judgment before God—that would be bad enough. But what makes it so desperate, what makes it so compellingly bad is that man is unable and he is

unwilling to prepare himself for the inevitable verdict and the consequences against his sin. In fact Jesus said that men are so miserable in their plight that they don't come to the light. In John 3:19 it says:

*This is the judgment that the light has come in to the world and men loved the darkness rather than the light for their deeds were evil.*

How bad is man's plight? The darkness in which he is in, the darkness which he pursues is that which will lead to his judgment, and Jesus said, he loves it that way. The darkness guarantees, seals his doom and he pursues the darkness and refuses to come to the light because he prefers the evil of his deeds to the holiness of God. He prefers his sin to the purity and the reign of Christ over his life—this is miserable. This plight of man in sin is unspeakably bad.

And there are three aspects of it that I want to bring out to you from a little bit of a survey of 1 John here, three elements that make the plight of man in sin so desperate. First of all, the plight of man in sin and there is three sub points here. Why is it so bad for man? Why was it so bad for you before you came to Christ? Why is it so bad for you now if you are not a believer in Christ?

#### **A. Man blends in to his hostile environment.**

The world is the hostile environment, the world is hostile to God, the world is opposed to God, the world is opposed to Christ. The world was acting according to its deepest held principles and loves and affections when it crucified Christ. And it is in that hostile environment that man finds himself, he lives in a world that is opposed to God and the gospel and he fits in there—that's the point. Look at what John says about the world as we just take a survey of passages most of which we have already looked at over the years.

First of all, the world opposes God and opposes His will. Look at 1 John 2:15:

*Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is not from the Father but it is from the world.*

These things flow from the source, the very nature of the world and it is at utter hostility with the holy God of the universe. The world opposes God and His will and is hostile to Him.

Not only that, the world opposes Christ and opposes Christianity. Look at chapter 3:1 where it says at the end of the verse:

*...The world does not know us because it did not know Him.*

*(chapter 3:13) Do not be surprised brethren if the world hates you...*

The hostility of the world toward God and the people of God is settled and it is irreconcilable.

There is this hostile environment in which men move and have their being, this is the environment in which man lives out his life. It is an environment of hostility toward the God of the Bible, hostility toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

And not only that, when it comes to what it is that would deliver us from this hostile environment, the gospel, the world is filled with false teachers who confuse issues, who teach false things and lead people in to hell and confirm them in their sin and depravity, all the while saying to them, “peace, peace when there is no peace.” This is part of the hostile environment. Look at chapter 4:1 where John says:

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God because many false prophets have gone out in to the world.*

False teachers, confusing matters, misrepresenting God, misrepresenting the gospel.

So, step back for a moment, here is man, under the judgment of God, here is man, deserving the judgment of God and on the fast track to eternal condemnation and he finds himself living in an environment that is hostile to God, opposed to God in his will, opposed to Christ, hating Christians and filled with false teachers who would confuse the matters even further. He is in darkness, he loves the darkness and the environment puts black curtains all around him and false teachers turn off the lights even further—this is desperately bad. Man is in sin and he is in a hostile environment.

Think about it beloved, there is nothing in our world system, in our entertainment, in our environment, in our news, in our discourse, however you want to expand it, there is nothing in our world system whatsoever that would point men to Christ—this is desperately bad. The world does not call us to the gospel, the world does not honor Christ and lift Him up and man’s miserable plight in sin is this, it goes beyond the environment, it is that he fits in to that environment, he blends naturally in to that environment like a fish swims in water. Listen to what Ephesians 2:3 says in this context where Paul says, “...among them...” among the dead, those who are dead in sin and under the wrath of God, he says:

*...among them we too (all) formerly lived in the lusts of the flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest.*

Sinners fit in this environment, they are comfortable in this environment, they like the environment that they are in and this is an environment that confirms them in sin and seals them for the Day of Judgment—this plight is desperate. Where is the help? Where is the deliverance that would come when a sinner himself is hostile to God, lives in an environment that is hostile to God? And there is evermore to drive the sinner further and further in to the bondage of darkness. Where is help to come from? This plight is miserable.

But beloved, it is worse than that. There is more to the darkness than that, than the hostile environment:

## **B. Man is blinded by his hostile enemy**

We said first of all that he blends in to his hostile environment and he does, but on top of that, he is blinded by his hostile enemy. The plight of man is made worse than the environment because outside of the world environment and ruling over the world environment, man has a supernatural enemy who is committed to keep him in that darkness. The Bible teaches that Satan himself obscures the gospel with supernatural power of his own, obscures the gospel by stimulating sin and promoting false doctrine and false philosophies through false teachers. And in an unseen realm, operating to so frame the thought and philosophies of man that it would further confirm men in their opposition to the gospel and hide the light of Christ from them.

Staying in 1 John just to look at few verses where John himself alludes to this and points to it, look at chapter 3:8, man, blinded by his hostile enemy, the devil, where it says:

*The one who practices sin is of the devil...*

This is a description of everyone apart from Christ, men apart from Christ are practitioners of sin, they are those who live in sin, walk in sin, and John says they find their source in the devil. Jesus said:

*You are a son of your father the devil who himself is a liar.*

Look at verse 8:

*The one who practices sin is of the devil for the devil has sinned from the beginning.*

*(verse 10) By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious. Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God.*

You have a supernatural, invisible being, Satan, the devil, stimulating men to sin, confirming them in sin, being the author of their sin. So much so, so closely related to the devil that the Bible rightly describes men without Christ as being sons and children of the devil himself, an evil, wicked spirit is their father. Look at chapter 4:3. Again, we are just kind of setting the environment that 1 John sets for the verse that we are going to look at this morning. This is a miserable plight, it is a grievous plight that man is in. Chapter 4:3:

*Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist of which you have heard that it is coming and now is already in the world.*

This evil doctrine, this false doctrine that confuses the truth about Christ to unbelievers, the spirit that is at work in the world and detracting men from the gospel so much so that in chapter 5:19 John contrasting Christians from the world from which they were delivered said:

*We know that we are of God and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

A wicked, evil, supernatural being, opposed to God ruling over the world environment in which men live—this is really bad.

But the Bible goes even further in describing this blindness that is created by our hostile enemy. It says that Satan supernaturally blinds men to prevent them from being saved. Satan is not passive in this, he is actively blinding men to discourage them and to keep them from coming to the gospel. Listen to what 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 says:

*The gospel is veiled to those who are perishing in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel and the glory of Christ.*

There is a supernatural blindness that Satan has blinded men with to keep them from the gospel. It is not just that the man in his heart hates the gospel and wants to continue in darkness, it is that Satan has blinded him from seeing the gospel. And so you have obstacle built upon obstacle, you have darkness built upon darkness, you have a man in darkness, in a world of darkness, ruled over by the prince of darkness—this is a terrible plight. When you lay it out in systematic fashion, it is utterly frightening—this is horrifying. This is the condition of billions of people throughout the world, this is the condition of men throughout our country, this is the condition of the neighbor down the street.

One thing more sobering to me is knowing as your pastor that it is the condition of some of you in the walls of this room. 2 Timothy 2:26 says that unbelievers are:

*...in the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*

Proclaiming their desire to be free and therefore not wanting to take on the yoke of Christ and the gospel, but utterly oblivious to the fact that they are actually bound and slaves to the devil himself and simply instruments of his will—his children, his slaves, blinded by this hostile enemy. Do you see that miserable plight of men, blinded by an enemy, hostile to God, captive to this wicked foe, and yet, it still works. So the plight of man is such that he blends in to his hostile environment, he is blinded by his hostile enemy:

### **C. He is bound to his own hostile essence**

Man can't simply blame it on his environment, he can't simply blame it on the devil, "The devil made me do it" as if that was contrary to the intentions and the purposes and the desires of his own heart. At its very core, man is hostile to God, he does not seek God and (get this) he cannot come to God through his own power and wisdom. Look at 1 John 2:9. Again we are just picking up little pieces to help set the context, to help you see the fullness of what was in the mind of the inspired apostle as he wrote. Actually, of the apostle as he wrote his inspired writings under the inspiration of the Spirit. But in chapter 2:9 he says:

*The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. (he is marked by this hatred)*

*(verse 11) The one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

This pervasive darkness in which he walks and this animating hatred in his heart toward God and toward those who love God, he is a slave, he is a captive to his own wicked heart in the midst of a hostile environment ruled over by a hostile enemy.

Apostle Paul confirms this and gives us other perspective in those familiar passages in Romans 3:10-12 where he said:

*There is none righteous, not even one. There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have become useless. There is none who does good, there is not even one.*

This is a universal condemnation of the human race, collectively and individually. Man is bound by his own hostile essence, he does not seek for God, he is under this thread of judgment, this impending judgment, and he does not even seek for the one God who could deliver him.

Romans 8:7-8 add another perspective to it where Paul said:

*The mindset on the flesh is hostile toward God for it does not subject himself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

1 Corinthians 2:14 says:

*The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually appraised.*

This is the plight of man in sin, my brothers and sisters in Christ. He blends in to a world that is hostile to God. Satan has supernaturally blinded him and in his own heart he prefers the darkness over the light, he cannot understand the things of God, he is hopelessly and miserably lost. And this is the Bible's verdict on all of humanity, this is the condition of the human race—universally, utterly, miserably lost.

I will ask you a question in light of what the Bible says about that. Left the man on his own in his own environment under the dominion of Satan, where is the ray of hope for such a man? Where is the opportunity for deliverance? There is none, there is absolutely no hope by the power of man in this environment under the domination of the devil for any possible deliverance from that condition. He does not have it in himself, he does not have the power to do it, he does not have the desire to be delivered from it—this is utter, total darkness.

Now, with all of those supernatural foes and supernatural darkness arrayed against him, against man, that was once true of you, the question is if all of those things are true and they are straight from God's word, how is it that any of you ever came to saving faith in Christ? How is it that anyone ever escapes under the domination of that kind of darkness? How is it that anyone has

hope of eternal life when he blends in to this hostile environment, when he is blinded by a hostile enemy and when he is bound to his own essence which is hostile to God—how could anything come out of that? Our next point is:

## 2. The Power of God in Salvation

You see the surpassing power of God, you see the surpassing greatness of God in the fact that He has the power to intervene in to that dark environment and deliver souls from it. He has the power to intervene and overcome the world environment in which the sinner lives and deliver him from it. He has the power to break the spell of Satan and to open the eyes that Satan has blinded, He has the power to do that and He has the power to overcome the wicked opposing heart, the sinful, rejecting, rebelling heart, God has the power to turn that in order to bring about deliverance. You must see the power of God in salvation because (here is the point, here is the bridge, here is the transitional point) given the miserable plight of man in sin, it is obvious that if salvation is ever to occur, God Himself and God alone must intervene on His own initiative in order to impart life in that dead environment—that is the only way that salvation can occur because there is nothing in the world to prompt it, there is nothing in the heart of man to prompt it, it has to come from outside man, it has to come from outside this world for anyone to be saved from sin, and that my friends, is exactly what John is saying in 1 John 5:1, look at it with me, we will just focus on that first phrase. I love this, I am so excited to be saved from my sin, I am so excited that the Bible is the word of God, I am so excited that the gospel is true and I am so excited about this text that is in front of us in light of everything that we have just said. 1 John 5:1:

*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.*

Describing the Christian, describing the testimony of the Christian. You find someone who says (and we will expand what this means) “Jesus is the Christ, Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Savior, Jesus has rescued me from sin” the person who is truly saying that from the depth of a true faith commitment to Christ is somebody who has been born of God, somebody whom God has personally intervened in order to draw them to saving faith.

We are going to look at three aspects of the power of God in salvation from this verse:

### A. The substance of the belief

First of all, I want you to consider the substance of the belief that is described here:

*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.*

What is this belief, what is this saving belief John is building on what He has said in the first four chapters about saving faith, about what a true Christian looks like. And so we are assuming a lot as we come to this passage. But the substance of this belief, the belief that alone can deliver man from his miserable plight in sin, what is the substance of the belief, what is the content of that belief? “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ...” what is the substance of that belief, what



does it mean? The statement is referring to saving faith. If someone believes in Christ, to believe that Jesus is the Christ is to believe a wealth of biblical truth about Him. Jesus, the one in human flesh, the man born in Nazareth, actually born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, Jesus of Nazareth, that that historical man was the Christ, the Son of God. To believe that Jesus is the Christ is to believe that Jesus of Nazareth Himself is the divine Messiah, sent to save sinners in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. To believe that Jesus is the Christ is to believe that He was born, crucified and resurrected so that His blood could cover your sins and be the instrument of the forgiveness of your sins. To believe that Jesus is the Christ is to believe that He is the Son of God, fully equal with the Father with full authority over your life. To believe that Jesus is the Christ is to embrace Him personally with all your heart and to stake your eternal destiny upon Him because you know that you cannot save yourself. That's the substance of the belief, to believe that Jesus is the Christ is to believe that those things are true about Him, it is to believe in the context of 1 John. Look over at chapter 4:9, is to believe that:

*God has sent His only begotten Son in to the world so that we might live through Him.*

It is to believe that, in verse 10:

*God loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

It is to believe, in verse 14 that:

*The Father had sent the Son to be the savior of the world.*

In the context leading up to chapter 5:1, that is what John has been emphasizing that Christ is the one sent to bring us life, Christ is the one sent to be the propitiation for our sins, Christ is the one sent to be the savior of the world. And notice how those verses from chapter 4, talk about God's external intervention in to the world, sending Christ in to the world because there is no redemptive capacity to be found anywhere in the world or in the hearts of anyone who lives in the world. God intervened from outside in order to bring salvation to pass—that's the substance of the belief that Jesus is the Christ.

Now, most of you, many of you believe that, you are here today believing that, trusting in Christ, believing those things about Him being sent in the world and you have committed yourselves to Him, you have entrusted yourselves to Him, you have received Christ and you rest in Him alone and in His perfect righteousness for being your righteousness before God—you believe that and trust that, you rest in that, you are confident in that.

Where my friends would that faith come from when you were in such a miserable plight? That's the question that's at stake here, that's what John is addressing here. Look at chapter 5:1 with me again, he says:

*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ...*

He is going to make a statement, describing them, a statement that is true of every single person whoever became a Christian. Without exception, anyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ in the saving way we just described is born of God, this is described in the second sub point here:

### **B. The source of the belief**

Where did your belief come from? Listen (at the risk of repeating myself) it did not come from your own heart, it couldn't have. You were dead in sin, dead men don't do anything. You were dominated by the devil, he doesn't give up his captives willingly. And if you are his slave, you can't overcome him by your own power. You were in a world environment, hostile to God. There was no spark of divinity in you, there were no unprompted longings for God that came from your own sinful heart because the Bible itself says no one seeks for Him—so where did it come from? Where did you in your miserable condition of sin, where did you who were hostile to God make a transition from dead in to life--how is it possible?

Understand, in light of the miserable plight of man in sin that you have absolutely no credit to bring to the table for the fact that you stand in faith in Christ today, it had nothing to do with any wisdom on your part, any unprompted love for God on your part, it had to come from outside of you, it had to come from outside of this world, it had to come from God Himself. This verse, chapter 5:1 is telling us, teaching us that the God of the Bible, the God of the 66 books of the Bible, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the one who initiated salvation in us and He gets all the glory.

Listen to this, embrace this because this sets the trajectory of the remainder of your spiritual life here on earth. If you are a Christian, you believe in response to God's work in you not because it was your idea, not because you chose Christ as though you were able to do that on your own power. 1 John 4:19 says:

*We love because He first loved us.*

God was the initiator in your salvation not you. Beloved, you must get that straight and clear in your mind.

Now, let's look at the text a little more carefully here "whoever believes is born of God". John uses the Greek perfect tense to express that "is born of God". Now listen, I don't get technical with Greek language stuff very often here, but this is important. When he is saying that "whoever believes this is born of God" "has been born of God" is another way to express that same idea. The perfect tense indicates a past event with continuing consequences. Here he is referring the past event that he is referring to, this being born of God. The past event that he is referring to is when God regenerated you, when God imparted new life to your dead and sinful heart and that past event produced the continuing consequence of your ongoing belief in Christ. The point of this is that the originating source of your belief in the Son of God was God Himself. God caused you to be born again, using Peter's language. God worked in your heart and changed your nature and your belief followed as a consequence of the work of God in your heart—it cannot be the other way around.

What is regeneration? We studied this in the past, you can look up the messages online, chapter 2:29, I spent three messages on it. But just to remind you, the regeneration is a secret act of the Holy Spirit. We are looking at things that are unseen—remember? We are considering things that are unseen that frame our whole philosophy of life—that’s why we are spending time on this. Regeneration is a secret act of the Holy Spirit in which He imparts divine life to a sinner so that that sinner in response repent of sin, believe in Christ and serve Christ in newness of life. God moved on your heart and as a result of that you believed in Him.

I don’t want to make a big chronological sequence here, but you must understand from whatever considerations of chronology that different men like to debate about, the fact is that God was the initiator of your salvation—that’s the main point here. It was God’s act in regeneration that produced your faith.

Listen, look at it from negative perspective. God did not cause you to be born again because you brought faith to the table. Regeneration, indwelling of the Holy Spirit was not a reward for your unprompted faith. When you put your faith in Christ, it was because God had already moved and imparted life to you, He breathed life in to your dead and darkened soul and in the words of the hymn, He shown that ray of light in your soul and you awoke in the dungeon’s flamed with light, and you rose and went forth and followed Christ. It was because the divine eye, your eye defused a quickening ray, of all people Charles Wesley said, “Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke the dungeon flamed with light.” That’s the description of regeneration. This has enormous implications and I want you to be thoroughly convinced of this from the text in the time we have remaining.

Understand that in the physical realm, a baby is born and then he starts to breathe. Babies don’t breathe in the womb, they are born and then they start to breathe. In the spiritual realm, God causes you to be born again and then as a consequence of that, you begin believing. It is because the divine life and the soul of man must come from God and you see the effect of that and not the cause of it.

Now, you can see the sequence by comparing similar passages in 1 John, I want you to see this and I want you to stay with me because there is a very important pastoral point, the whole consequence of this is pastoral. But you must be convinced of the underlying theology before the pastoral point has its power. Look at chapter 3:9, the sequence of God causing us to be born again and then consequence is flowing from is what we are looking at. Chapter 3:9 says:

*No one who is born of God practices sin because His seed abides in him and he cannot sin because he is born of God.*

Look, you understand that salvation is by grace through faith not by works. It is not because you stopped sinning that God caused you to be born again. It is not because you practiced works of righteousness and His response to that that you were born again. This is the exact same grammatical construction when John said he cannot sin because he is born of God. He is saying that a change of the dynamic of the sin in the believer’s life flows as a consequence of having been born again. You realize clearly here in this verse that you cannot reverse the sequence

without teaching the works-based salvation—you can't go the other way, you can't go the other direction. You are born of God and your relationship to sin changes.

Now, look at chapter 4:7, it's the exact same construction, he says:

*Beloved, let us love one another for love is from God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*

Simply making the point that loving others did not cause us to be born again. Our love for the brethren flows from the fact that God imparted life to us. Your relationships changed because God imparted life to you. Your love for the brothers came not so that you could earn God's favor, not so you could love enough and then God could cause you to be born again, no, it is the other way, it started with God flowing out of the new life that He gave you in the new disposition of love toward those of the church.

Now, in the same way, with the exact same grammatical construction, look at chapter 5:1:

*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.*

Your belief did not cause God to give you eternal life. God imparted life to you, then you believed. There was a monergistic act of sovereign grace to you that brought you to saving faith. The classic illustration biblical of this is Lydia in Acts 16:14 where it says:

*The Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.*

She was in darkness, the Lord opened her heart and she responded to saving faith. God had to unlock the dungeon before the prisoner could go free—that's the source of the belief. God did not make you a new creation because you believed, you believed because God made you a new creation. You were a recipient and a responder to divine work. God was not the recipient of your faith and responder to what you did to Him—that's the source of your belief.

Now why is that so important and what does that have to do with life today? All comes together now with this simple statement, the origin determines the outcome. Or to state it differently, the next sub point:

### **C. The security of the belief**

John's real point here is pastoral ultimately. Listen, the past 15 minutes had been designed for this next statement. If God overcame your plight in sin to bring you to salvation in the first instance, He will most certainly and most capably will deliver you to the final outcome of salvation without fail. You will most certainly be glorified in Christ because that is the reason for which God saved you. The certainty of being delivered to that final glorious outcome of salvation when you are glorified with Christ in heaven is guaranteed by the same power of God that saved you in the first instance. If He delivered you from the bondage of sin, the bondage of the world and the bondage of Satan and He has freed you from that, then He is going to carry

you through it to the glorious consummation that still awaits us here today without fail. You can take that to the bank because the power of God that delivered you back then is the power of God that will still deliver you in the day to come. Look at chapter 5:4, that's his point, he says:

*For whatever is born of God overcomes the world and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.*

Referring to our faith as short-hand reference to the glory of our salvation, our faith which was born of God and energized by God in the first place.

Listen, the power that overcame that hostile world, that hostile enemy and your own hostile heart is the same power that inexorably leading you to glory. Think about this in reverse. All that originally kept you from coming to salvation, the world's hostility, the devil himself and your own sinful wicked heart, all of those elements that kept you from coming to salvation, God has delivered you from and now they can't pull you back. Whatever happens in this world cannot cause you to come short of the glory for which God has appointed you--the outcome is certain.

And here is what that means for you and me, no matter how bad things seem to be now, you always have to come back to these first principles, you have to push the circumstances away for the time being and remember the unseen things that are eternal, that shape reality for you as a believer in Christ. You have to forget about circumstances and remind yourself that the power that delivered me from sin is the same power that is going to deliver me to heaven and that should do this for you. Your life, your approach to life, your attitude toward circumstances now, your attitude toward an uncertain future yet to come should be framed by a controlling absolute confidence that comes from knowing that God started your salvation with supernatural power that no one can defeat and that He will complete your salvation with that same supernatural power that no one can defeat. You and I, walking through this world, this hostile world, you and I, in advancing age and declining health and adverse circumstances and all kind of sorrow, you and I of all people, you and I should be the men and women who look forward with the firmest fact and say "I'm confident, going forward as I know the power that saved me when He says that He will deliver me and I know that whatever is born of God and that includes me will overcome the world." This world cannot defeat us. Philippians 1:6:

*He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Beloved, it comes out well in the end. I can't tell you how this or that circumstance turn out, but it doesn't matter. And when your circumstances and when unexpected severe trials intervene, go back to this fundamental principle that is so hard to embrace, but is so true. Even when life collapses, nothing has changed. I realize how challenging that is, but that is the way that we approach life—nothing has changed, God saved me from sin, God is going to help me overcome the world, the outcome is certain, nothing has changed, just the manifestation of outer circumstances. God's eternal purpose is the same, His sustaining power is the same, the ultimate outcome of glory in heaven with Christ is the same—nothing has changed. You like that don't you? I do too. That is what frames your life here on earth, that is what gives you control and confidence, that is where joy and holiness and assurance of salvation comes from. When you

recognize that God was the power and the initiating force behind your salvation, your attitude is “I’m simply content to be in the hands of the one who saved me and I find my joy and my contentment and my assurance right there and so I live life from this position of strength.” That is victory, blessed His holy name.

Let’s pray. *Father, our plight was indeed miserable, we were dead in sin and we liked it that way and yet, in your glorious providence, by the power of the gospel, by the power of Christ, you intervened and saved us, delivered us from our plight by your divine power, at your divine initiative, we are recipients of amazing grace. We thank you for that and we take confidence in it as we go forward. Father, I pray for these believers that are here, facing the opposition and obstacles that this world brings. Father, bring to their hearts the deep assurance that whatever is born of God overcomes the world and the victory is ours in the end and we live now in light of that certain victory which is still to come.*

*For those whose hearts are still hard Father, I just ask you to do what you did to Lydia. Open their hearts so that they can respond to the things that we have been speaking. We honor you, we glorify you, we totally humble ourselves before you Father. Salvation is of the Lord it is not of us, we did not cooperate with you to make it happen, you did it, you rescued us and now you will bring us to glory. In that we rejoice. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*