

In this passage John states that God has provided us with many witnesses that testify that the only way to obtain eternal life is through His Son Jesus Christ. To disbelieve the testimony that God has given in order to seek another way of salvation is to call Him a liar.

John starts this chapter with a continuation of the discussion of love that he began in the previous chapter.

¹ Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” - John repeats the statement that he has made several times in this epistle. Only someone who has been born of God can genuinely and truthfully state that he/she believes that truly Jesus truly is the Christ, the Son of God.

“every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him” - John also restates the truth he mentioned in the previous chapter. Everyone who loves God (“him that begat”) will also love other Christians (“him that is begotten of him”). God is our Father and Christians are those who have been born of Him and are His children and should love one another.

² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments” - We can know that we are loving other Christians because the evidence is that we love God and want to keep His commandments. As John has said multiple times, one of God’s commandments is that we love one another. If we are keeping God’s commandments then loving the children of God will be included.

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments” - We express our love to God by our obedience to His commands. **“and his commandments are not grievous [burdensome; severe]”** - Unlike the commandments of some human kings or rulers, God’s commandments are not unreasonable, unrighteous or oppressive. It should not be a burden for God to expect us to obey the way of righteousness. His commandments are good and righteous and not those of an evil despot. It is the sinfulness of the human heart that resists obedience to God’s commands.

⁴ For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. ⁵ Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh [conquer; to win a victory] the world” - The world is the *world system* that John refers to back in 1 John 2:15-17. Satan has so crafted this world system to ensnare people in sin and distract them away from the truth of the gospel that would set them free. The Greek word for “overcometh” is in the present tense, indicating a continual victory over the world’s attempt to blind and distract us from the truth of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

“and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” - The element that gives us the victory over the world’s snares is our faith in Jesus Christ, the One Who has redeemed from the wages of sin. It is not our righteousness, our works or our will power that gives us the victory for it only comes through faith in Christ.

“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” - John is reemphasizing that it is impossible to overcome the world and escape the destined destruction that the world is headed for outside of faith in Jesus Christ. Here he says “Who else can overcome the world but those that believe that Jesus is the Son of God?” He who tries to keep the law or establish his own righteousness will not overcome the world for salvation is by faith alone.

⁶ This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

It has been said that these next three verses collectively are some of the most perplexing in the New Testament. Commentators do not agree as to what John means by “water” and “blood.” There have been many interpretations put forward and neither space nor time will allow them all to be listed here. However, the “best” (which seems to be a matter of opinion) seems to be the one described here.

“This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood” - In John’s day there were those who believed that Jesus received the “Christ spirit” at His baptism and it left Him before the cross. They rejected the idea that God would/could die on a cross. John makes a point to emphasize that Christ came not by water alone but also by blood. The “water” may refer to either the water of His birth or more likely to His baptism in Jordan at the hands of John the Baptist. The “blood” would then refer to His death on the cross. These events would reflect the beginning and ending of His public ministry. John wants us to know that Jesus fulfilled His role of being the Christ all the way through His death on the cross so that He might purchase our salvation. The cross was not something for Christ to avoid but was the actual reason that He came.

“And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth” - The Holy Spirit, the One Who leads us into all truth (John 16:13), bears witness with our spirit that Jesus is indeed the Christ, our Savior.

⁷ For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.

All three persons in the Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) testify in agreement that Jesus is the Christ, the One to Whom we are to look for salvation. There is salvation under no other name, as Peter said while preaching to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem: **Acts 4:12** “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

⁸ And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

“And there are three that bear witness in earth” - Just as there are three witnesses in heaven whose testimony is in agreement as to the identity and mission of Jesus Christ, there are three witnesses on earth that also give testimony to that fact.

“the spirit, and the water, and the blood” - (1) The Holy Spirit – He give us testimony in our hearts as to the identity of Christ, as well as doing so throughout the ministry of Christ on earth; (2) the water – Jesus’s baptism, which inaugurated Jesus’ earthly ministry, gave testimony of Christ through the Holy Spirit descending on Him as a dove as well as the voice of the Father testifying to His Son; (3) the blood - Jesus’ death on the cross gave testimony as to the purpose of Christ on earth – to bear our sins.

“and these three agree in one” - These three witnesses are in complete agreement as to the identity of Christ and His mission.

⁹ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater” - We are accustomed to accepting the testimony of men as being true in the absence of a reason to believe they are lying. If we are willing to trust the testimony of men, we ought to trust the testimony of God even more. The testimony of men can be untrue for they may tell something that is untrue, either intentionally or because of their limited knowledge. However, since God is incapable of lying and His knowledge is infinite then His testimony is completely trustworthy.

“for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son” - The testimony of Jesus Christ comes from God Himself, therefore this testimony is more reliable than any testimony that comes from a man.

¹⁰ He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. ¹¹ And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself” - This statement can be taken in two ways: (1) the believer has the Holy Spirit as a witness residing within him; (2) the believer has the evidence within himself that Jesus Christ is the Savior because of his changed life since believing on Christ (he is “living proof” that Jesus Christ saves from sin).

“he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record [witness; testimony] that God gave of his Son” - The unbeliever does not believe what God has said about His Son and thus is in effect calling God a liar.

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son” - For several verses John has been speaking of witnesses and their testimony (record), especially that given by God. Now he tells us what that testimony is. The testimony of all these witnesses (Father, the Word, Holy Ghost, spirit, water, and blood) is this – that God offers us eternal life, and the only way to get that eternal life is through His Son Jesus Christ. Eternal life does not come through our good deeds or through our own righteousness. It can only come through trusting in what Christ accomplished on the cross in our behalf.

¹² He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

In case we misunderstand the previous verse, John restates the concept in simple terms so that anyone can understand. If you have Jesus Christ the Son of God then you have eternal life. If you do not have Christ, then you do not have eternal life. God has provided no other way for us to gain eternal life.

1 John 4:9 *“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”*

John 1:4 *“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”*

John 3:36 *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”*

John 11:25 *“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:”*

John 14:6 *“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*

Acts 4:12 *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”*