

## PRAY

1 John 5:6-18

I know the whole passage is a bit long...but what drew me to this passage were verses 13 thru 15, but I needed to put in context....

.....and the more I looked at the earlier verses, the more they intrigued me  
.....so here we are....I think we'll be okay...let's go.

I want to take it in two bites...so let's look at each paragraph individually...

### **1 John 5:6-12**

**6** *This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.* **7** *For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.* **9** *If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son.* **10** *Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.* **11** *And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* **12** *Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

**Ok...at first glance verses 6, 7, & 8 are really perplexing, aren't they?**

I've read a few commentators say that these verses are the **most difficult to understand in the entire letter...**

I think that's an understatement. In my mind they are among the most difficult to understand in the entire NT.

I know the first time I read about the “water and the blood”...

I just scratched my head...**what in the world does that mean?**

And I have to tell you that I didn't choose this passage because I have any unique insight into the meaning **now** either...**but it's the word of God and has His truth for us**, so let's walk thru it and make whatever observations we can.

First of all, it goes without saying that John's original reader's understood what he meant in using the symbols “water & blood”....this wasn't lost on them... regardless of how difficult it is for us.

Historically the church has understood these words in several different way....

- Based on the words “...*For there are **three** that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree...*” some think it somehow refers to the Trinity.
- Some folk think that somehow it is a reference to the blood and water which flowed from Jesus' side when he was pierced by the spear at Calvary.
- Some think it is a reference to the two ordinances of the church: baptism & the Lord 's Supper.

I tend to agree with a fourth position...which is very likely the earliest understanding of these words.

- Water is a reference to Jesus' own baptism – which He made on behalf of His people and where he was declared to be the Son of God by the Father
- Blood (of course) is a reference to His death – which He also made on behalf of His people and completed the salvation that He came to accomplish

So... 'the water & the blood' act as bookends to Jesus' earthly ministry.

This understanding makes even more sense when we realize the heresy that John was writing against.

You know that when you read any letter, you know that the letters were written in response to some heresy, or situation, or problem in that particular church...that's why the commentators call the letters are "circumstantial" – meaning they were written in response to some circumstance.

Many times...like her in 1 John...we can only guess at the particular circumstance that prompted the letter. I call it "mirror-reading"; we read the argument John is making and we make good deductions about what he is arguing against. I bet we have all done something like this; we hear our wife or husband on the phone...we hear one half of the conversation...and make deductions about the part we can't hear. I know Gloria thinks she is an expert at that.

But we also know from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century writings of Irenaeus that John was arguing against an early form of Gnosticism mainly from a guy named Cerinthus.... Cerinthianism taught that the divine nature – "the Christ" – came upon Jesus at his baptism and – since God cannot die - departed from him prior to his death.

**John's crucial point is that Jesus is declared to be the Son of God, not only at his baptism (not by water only)...but also by His death.**

Now, most of us aren't debating people like Cerinthus...or even Jehovah Witnesses...or some other heresy. Most of us witness to people who are simply "**nominal**" Christians ...**Christians in name only.**

You know, you don't have to be a heretic to denigrate the gospel of Jesus Christ

- Another way is to simply ignore it.

I don't think most people ever seriously consider whether the propositions presented in the NT are true...they just don't give that much thought...

Please look at the verses that these verses...[NOTE: READ THEM]

- Verse 5 affirms that those who believe Jesus is the Son of God are those who overcome the world.
- Verse 13 assures us who believe in the Son of God that we have eternal life.

Ben did a wonderful job last week emphasizing the importance of the virgin birth and the incarnation. And it is the mystery of the incarnation – that **God** became flesh – that John argues for here.

No...we may not be talking to Cerenthus....but for those we do talk to...

..... they should know that the **truth about Jesus Christ is the central fact** upon whom ours lives & our hope is built.

- Unless the Divine and sinless Son had taken on humanity...identifying Himself with His people through flesh @ & the waters of baptism....
- Unless that God/Man Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sin by shedding His own blood...
- Unless Jesus “...*came by water and blood — not by the water only but by the water and the blood.*”

**....there would be no salvation.**

**Note two other things from verses 6 – 12:**

1. In verse 9 he introduces an argument that is called “from the lesser to the greater” Since we receive as fact testimony from 2 or 3 men....well, God is greater than men and His testimony needs to be believed or – essentially – we make God out to be a liar.

Brothers and sisters, unbelief is sin.

I know we feel compassion *for loved ones* who walk in darkness...and we pray for them. That’s right...we should.

But let’s not forget, it is a sin...an affront and an insult to God...it is rebellion..

**Verse 10:** “*Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar...*”

2. Note also in (verse 10) that the testimony of the Spirit, the water & the blood comprise the testimony of God Himself...God is giving witness / testimony of Jesus Christ as His own Son.

Ok...big picture...think about it: **Why is this so important to us?**

In the fullness of time, the eternal, Divine Son invaded time and history.

He who had created Time and Space stepped into time & space....God became man.

**Christianity is unique among all the world’s religions.**

- Every other world religion has in some way Man attempting to be like God.
- **Christianity alone believes God became man.**
- All other of the world’s religions believe in reaching some sort of moral or ethical standard...  
Become 51% good; obey the golden rule or the 10 commandments.....,  
All other of the world’s religions have good views!
- **Christianity alone has good news!**

We hold to historical facts...attested to by eyewitness accounts.

**This is not something aside.....This is crucial to our faith.**

**Listen to the way this letter of John begins:**

*“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life — the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us — that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you...”*

This is John’s testimony...what we have in our passage in **chapter 5 is God’s testimony**.

God’s testimony is both objective and subjective:

- It is objective in that there are historical facts – the water & the blood – which frame the earthly ministry of Jesus
- It is subjective because it is the Spirit who instills these historical facts with truth in our hearts.... He is the Spirit of truth - & we have this testimony in ourselves. (v 10)

This is very much like what Paul says, right? (Rom 8:16)

*“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...”*

This is what we call the subjective or inward testimony of the Holy Spirit...

Without this work of the Holy Spirit, we could not believe...and we would not believe

I said that right: **we would NOT be able to believe.**

Cam will be teaching much more on the inward testimony of the Holy Spirit in Sunday school on the 23<sup>rd</sup> ....so please plan on being downstairs at 9:30 that morning.

Let’s move on to the last paragraph...

*Verse 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.14 And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.15 And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*

One basic rule of Biblical interpretation is to understand the purpose the author has in writing...

I love it when the writers make it easy on us .. making their purpose explicit...like here...

**The obvious intent of these words is to assure us in our salvation.**

John's entire letter offers to us (3) "tests of life"...as they have been called:

1. The first test is what we have just got done talking about: do you believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God who is the atoning sacrifice for our sins?
2. The second test is if you are walking in the light; There are none of us without sin, but are you confessing your sins and do you seek his forgiveness and His cleansing from your sin?
3. Thirdly, do you love the brethren?

3 tests of life..

When John says "*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life;*" ...."**these things**" refers to everything he has written...the entire letter...including these three tests of **faith, obedience, & love.**

You know...some people say that we cannot be sure of our salvation; that to claim you're going to heaven is presumptuous....and over-stepping our bounds

If God's word gives us assurance **so that we may know** we have eternal life, then it seems presumptuous to think otherwise...presumptuous to think that we cannot know.

If Jesus died so that our sins may be paid for and that we may have abundant life, then isn't it dishonoring to God to doubt that....to question His word and his work??

*"...this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.... And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him."*

Assurance of eternal life results in a boldness & a confidence in our requests to God... You agree with me right...? That's why he has written this.

The purpose is to encourage & assure us in our prayers.  
There is no vacillating here...no hesitation.

BUT - what **weak** and **hard-headed** and **pathetic** creatures we are who listen to these words of divinely inspired comfort and derive from them discouragement and doubt!

We hear these words: "...*that if we ask anything according to his will, He hears us*" ...and we think of that as **God's "loophole"**!

Shame on us...shame on us! This passage is meant to encourage us – not to discourage us. But we think that if we don't quickly receive what we ask for, "Well, I guess it wasn't God's will."

..... maybe we need to re-adjust our thinking.

Some of you remember a statement James makes about prayer:

***“You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.”***

NOW...do you know the words that immediately follow that statement?

**Get a grip brothers & sisters, because these words are for us:** *“You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?”*

We are not intended to be a friend of what this world offers.

**I want to say this clearly**: I do not believe that God intends for us to have ***our best life now***, nor do I have any patience for men or women who teach a “prosperity” gospel.

Of course God wants us to be rich...but I hope you understand that has NOTHING to do with your bank account... God will not cater to our passions or coveting.

And so – I trust it is obvious to you – that this promise in 1 John that

*“...we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him....”*

**is not** a blank check to expect whatever self-centered or material thing our hearts may desire.

The Bible **never** promises that!

God is not a giant Mister Rogers in the sky who loves *you just the way you are....*

OK...wait...let me correct myself:

Yes... He loves us just the way we are...

...but He also loves us too much to leave you the way you are!

Prayer is one crucial means God uses to accomplish the **“not leaving us the way we are.”**

Prayer doesn't change God's mind about things...it changes my mind.

This promise does not constrain God to do our will...

...rather prayer bends our will to his.

**Jesus prayed...**

*“Not my will, but thy will be done*

**And Jesus taught us to pray...**

*“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done,”*

*”....All prayer emulates that model prayer, right?*

In a sense, this defines prayer....

.....for us to know God's will & to **happily** submit embrace it.

**I hope this New Year brings a new resolve in each one of us to pray.**

We learn to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God;

...we bow our heads and bend our knees and bend our hearts.

We say, **“Your kingdom come. Not my will, but your will be done.”**

You’ll remember this quote by C. S Lewis:

“...if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

Ouch.

Peter says: *“...he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature..”*

May I give you an example of ONE or TWO **uncompromising** & ***very great promises...***?  
**David says in Psalm 37,**

*“Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”*

That’s very much like our passage isn’t it...it assures us; it promises us that He will give us what we want...

It does not say *“if we ask according to His will”*

BUT NOTICE...it does say **“Delight yourself in the Lord”**

**...which is much like the same thing.**

If Jesus is truly our **treasure** and our **delight**...then what is the desire of our heart?  
What is it that we really want?

**It’s Him, right?**

Hebrews says, *“...without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”*

And how does He reward those who seek Him?

**Its obvious: they find Him.**

We ask for things that we think we bring us peace or comfort or happiness...

We ask for money or a job...or a mate...or a grandchild..

Many times these aren’t ***bad*** things...BUT...Listen to Lewis one last time:

**“God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from giving Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.”**

That’s God’s will...It is not unknowable.

He has revealed it to us in this book.

When Jesus asked that same basic question about God's will, he did not hesitate.

And he said, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*"

That is the great commandment...this is God's will....this is what He really wants...  
That we should Love Him...delight ourselves in Him...seek to know Him more

What an incredible promise these words contain: *we know He hears us & we know that if He hears us, we have the requests we have asked of him.*

PLEASE...don't ask for mud pies in the slum.

I realize that I haven't answered every question we have about this...

BUT – I'll say it again – I do hope that for 2011 we make some **godly**-resolutions.

Let's resolve to learn His promises and to trust them and place our hope in them....and have confidence in them.

Let's resolve to pray for those things we **REALLY** want....

Ps 16:11

*"You make known to me the path of life;  
in your presence there is fullness of joy;  
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."*