

Genuine Victory

1 John 5:1-12

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Today, we continue our study in 1 John. We only have two more passages in 1 John before we begin a new series. We're in 1 John chapter 5, and we're particularly looking at verses 1-12. So if you have a Bible, take some time to open there. We're going to kind of trace verse by verse as we follow this theme of victorious faith. God's salvation brings genuine victory and faith is the victory.

1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. 4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

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.

What a great passage of Scripture! John writes with such simple language, and yet such profound truth for us to build our life upon.

In the 14th century, the Bubonic Plague struck Europe. This terrible disease was highly contagious and it was gruesomely painful. It caused a high fever and then these weeping blisters would break out upon the bodies of the victims. The exact numbers are kind of sketchy, but historians estimate that upwards to 60 percent of the European population perished as a result of the Bubonic Plague. 60 percent of the people died! At that time, the church responded with fear. Many priests abandoned the sick out of concern for their own lives. Some historians believe that this response of fear actually weakened the church to the point where people were more open to the Reformation some 150 years later.

We flash forward to the year 1517. A young monk named Martin Luther nails 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg church and the Reformation begins. Luther unleashes the true Gospel of Jesus that would bring heart change to so many. Ten years later, in 1527,

the Bubonic Plague returned to the city of Wittenberg. You can imagine the kind of fear this produced in this small German city. While the world at that time didn't have a scientific understanding of this disease and of its transmission, they did know that being near a sick person was really dangerous. So everyone, when the Bubonic Plague came into Wittenberg, raced to get out of the village; everyone who could. The Elector of Saxony, his name was John the Steadfast, ordered the Professor Martin Luther to leave the city for his own safety. Well, Martin Luther refused. He believed it was his responsibility to stay. So he, his pregnant wife, Katherine, and their one year old son remained. They even opened their house as a ward for the sick. Now, this decision would come at an extremely high price. After Luther's infant daughter, Elizabeth, was born, she contracted the plague and she soon rested safely in the arms of God.

There was a fellow pastor who asked Martin Luther the question of whether or not it was right for a Christian to flee during such a time. Luther responded with a very loving pastoral letter. It was entitled "Whether one may flee from a deadly plague." He wrote with spiritual challenge, but also with insight. He appealed to Matthew 25, where Jesus says "I was sick and you did not visit me." Luther writes, "According to the passage (Matthew 25) we are bound to each other in such a way that no one may forsake the other in his distress but is obliged to assist and help him as he himself would like to be helped."

He wrote that it was not necessarily wrong to flee from death and he noted how David fled from Saul when Saul was trying to kill him. But that we have to consider our communities needs, our families needs first. He would write, "No one should dare leave his neighbor unless there are others who will take care of the sick in their stead and nurse them...we are bound to each other..."

I love that language because it represents his view of the church.

"We are bound to each other in such a way that no one may forsake the other in his distress but is obliged to assist and help him as he himself would like to be helped." He believed that when fear motivated us to abandon our neighbor in a day of trouble, he says we "lose Christ, our light and life."

Luther's understanding of the church as a community was more than a nice theory to teach other seminarians. He understood that our bond in Christ as a church made a radical difference. It made a radical difference in really practical decisions. It made a radical difference in our commitment to care for each other, even if that decision would involve something so radical as staying behind in a city full of plague in order to care for brothers and sisters.

If you read that tract, there are two more points of interest. First, Luther believed that public officials had a duty to remain behind in the city if a plague hit it. He believed that God set those officials and gave them authority for the purpose of serving, for the purpose of preserving life. And Luther also encouraged everyone to take medicine. He encouraged everyone to disinfect their homes. He encouraged measures like social distancing. He didn't call it that, but that was his point, in order to curb the death rate of

the plague. He wrote that at times it was necessary to “avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus infect and pollute others.”

Why would Luther stay, along with his family, in a city that had been invaded by this plague, when it would have been much safer for him and his wife and his children to flee? Why would he do that? The answer is simply faith. It is faith in Jesus Christ. A key verse for Martin Luther throughout his life was Romans 1:17. “The just shall live by faith.”

Today, we open up our Bibles to 1 John 5:1-12 where John teaches us the value of living by faith. The main idea we’re going to see throughout this section is that faith is the victory that overcomes the world. John has already taught us the necessity of faith in this letter.

1 John 3:23 And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

And all through his gospel, he’s leaning into this necessity of faith. In that most famous verse, John 3:16, he says

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Faith is the channel that delivers God’s saving life into our soul. Paul says it this way. “By grace you have been saved through faith!” Grace saves us, but it’s our faith that connects us to that grace. So our faith doesn’t save us. It’s God’s grace. But our faith is the channel through which God’s saving grace flows into our lives. We do not receive God’s saving love through our efforts, through our goodness, through our religious observances. God’s life is obtained simply as we trust or believe in Jesus Christ to be our Savior and Lord. Once God grants this salvation that comes through faith, we still need faith. Faith is not a one time event that we needed in order to gain entrance into God’s kingdom. Faith is that essential element that we carry all throughout our life while we walk this earth. Now, there will be a day when we won’t need faith, and that’s the day when we see God face to face. We’ll become like Him. Faith gives way to sight. What glory we’ll experience! We await that day. But until then, faith is absolutely essential. “The righteous shall live by faith.”

John wants us to see the value of authentic faith through this section. So we’re going to talk about the value of authentic faith. Let me begin with a definition. Authentic faith is a living trust in God that changes what we do and how we think. So it has a powerful effect, but it’s a living trust in God. Faith joyfully embraces everything that God says and then that faith acts upon what God says. Faith is more than knowledge. It’s more than assent. It’s more than emotion. It’s an active trust and reliance upon the living God. John is going to outline four specific values of authentic faith in this section.

Value #1: Authentic Faith reveals regeneration.

It gives evidence of this life of God in our soul.

I Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.

John answers three really important questions in this one verse. First, where does authentic faith come from? Second, what is the object of authentic faith? And finally, what is the relationship between authentic faith and love? Remember, he had just given this great dissertation about love at the end of chapter 4.

So where does authentic faith come from? I'm going to ask you to put on your Bible study glasses for a moment and observe some verb tenses that John uses. Verb tense is going to be important to understand his message. So you might notice this in verse 1. It says "everyone who believes." He's using the present tense. He's indicating right now, ongoing action. It is everyone who is presently believing. And then he goes on to say that Jesus is the Christ "has been born of God." Now that's perfect tense. Perfect tense means that this is action that has taken place in the past, but is ongoing in its result. And so again, what John is communicating to us is that those who presently have ongoing faith have had something occur in their life. That something is that they have been born of God.

This is shockingly profound to many! It's so shocking that when I say this next statement, some of you will think, "I am not sure if I believe that, Pastor." John is saying that our present believing in Jesus is the result of the past event of having been born of God. He's not saying that saving faith is the cause of being born again. But he's saying that saving faith, this ongoing faith is the result of having been born of God. In other words, the reason that you and I believe is because God in His grace placed His life in us. John here is not saying, "Everyone who is born of God has believed in Jesus." That's not what he's saying. Now, I believe that's actually true. I believe other Scriptures establish that. But that's not John's point here. Remember why John is writing this letter. If we look forward to verse 13, he says

1 John 5:13 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.

John writes so that those who believe would know that we know that we know that we know that we are secure in Christ. So verse 1 is a powerful confirmation to us.

I Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God,

He is telling us that the presence of authentic faith is the result of God already having given us life. So if we have authentic faith, we know that we've been born of God. That's the only place authentic faith comes from. The reason we believe is because God has already given the gift of spiritual life. We would never believe if we are still dead in our sins.

Authentic faith is not the result of our own will. It's not the result of our own production. It's not caused by a wise decision that we made. Authentic faith has one source, and that is God's Spirit. It is God's Spirit placing His life in our souls so that our blind eyes see that God is a glorious God, our deaf ears hear that God's Words are true, and our dead hearts walk out of the tomb and we embrace Jesus Christ as our Savior, as our Lord. We believe because we have been made alive by God's sovereign grace. Wow! Grace in regeneration precedes our response of faith.

What comfort there is in this truth! The security of our salvation doesn't lean against the cardboard wall of our own will. The security of our salvation leans against the steel strength of God's sovereign pleasure! Our faith is lasting not because we're strong, but our faith is lasting because the life that God has given us in our soul cannot die. And that life produces this faith.

I know many reject this wonderful truth. And I'm not sure exactly why it's offensive to so many. I wonder, is it because we want something to be our part in our salvation? Is it because we want something that is part of this new life that we can say, "That little thing called faith right there, that's mine"? I am not sure what motivates the offense, but God deserves all the glory for our salvation. Our salvation from first to last is of Him and from Him. In John's gospel, this is how he describes this new life, this rebirth. He says this:

John 1:12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

The question is how did they receive Him? And John answers that in verse 13. He says

1 John 1:13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

They are born of God's power, God's grace, God's pleasure.

Here's the application. Your authentic faith is a gift from God. Your authentic faith proves that you have been born of God. So treasure that faith. Protect her. Nourish her. Love her. Don't neglect her. The gift of faith will be attacked by Satan. It will be attacked by this world. So guard her with your life. She is the precious gift through which we receive every other gift that is offered us in Christ.

What is the object of authentic faith? John answers that for us as well, here.

1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ

Authentic Faith has a specific object. Faith in and of itself has no value. I have a friend who died because of a faulty faith. A man told him that the plane he was flying in had been inspected and was all ready to go. It had not been inspected and that plane crashed. Faith in the wrong object can bring disaster upon our soul! Faith is only as valuable as its

object. Our faith is not valuable because it's faith. Our faith is valuable because of Jesus Christ; what faith embraces, what faith attaches itself to. John has already taught us what the object of authentic faith is. Look back in chapter 4.

1 John 4:2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,

The object of authentic faith is always Jesus. He has come in the flesh. He's from God. He is God. He died upon the cross as a propitiation for sins. And here's the application. Share Jesus with others so that they might believe. The one true object of authentic faith is Jesus Christ; God come in the flesh, dying upon the cross for our sins. So tell others of Jesus! Only faith in Jesus Christ matters.

Now, our world believes that any kind of faith matters. That's simply not true. Faith in the wrong person or the wrong thing will actually destroy the soul. It's fatal. So as believers, followers of Jesus who believe in Him, let's find some winsome, but courageous way to tell our family and friends who are believing other things besides Jesus, that they need to place their faith in Jesus Christ in order to receive the life that God has for them. Point them to Him!

The third question is what is the relationship between authentic faith and love? He answers this at the end of verse 1.

1 ...everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.

John emphasizes that love for our brothers and sisters in Jesus is the major identifying mark of a Christian. And here John says that love and faith are always twins that feed one another. So our faith feeds love and our love feeds our faith. It's a tragedy when those in the "Love Camp" seem to be so weak in regard to faith. They say, "We're just all about love. Love everybody else and accept everybody for where they are and don't be too strong on what is true and what is false." That's a tragedy! But it's also a tragedy when those in the "Faith Camp" are so weak in love. "All that matters is a doctrinal statement; that we're right about morality or right about theology." And then we don't reach out in love for our brothers and sisters. We allow disagreements and divisions of all kinds to exist within the church. And that, too, is sad, sad, sad!

So the application again is let's make sure that faith and love, both of which are produced by the life of God in our soul, that they always meet, they always cling to each other, that they lock. So the first value is authentic faith reveals regeneration. It's evidence of this life of God.

Value #2: Authentic Faith joyfully obeys God's commandments.

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

John teaches us that we love God because He first loved us and He placed His life in our soul. His life in our soul produces this love for Him. And then verse 1 says that whoever loves the Father; that is present tense. Again, it's continuing to love the Father. Whoever is continuing to love the Father has been born of Him. That's perfect tense. In other words, again, our regeneration produces or causes this love for God. And then he adds that our love for God obeys God.

We can't love God and disobey Him. Love and obedience also are connected. They're always together. It's nonsensical talk to say, "I love God," and then we walk in disobedience. Love for God always obeys. Obedience is the fundamental, foundational action that love makes toward God. Love for God is not primarily emotional or sentimental. It is a commitment of one's heart to honor and worship and submit to Him as God.

And I have to say, there is a real danger to sentimentality being a part of our worship of God. Emotion and sentiment is great in itself, but it's superficial. Let's not rest our life upon it. It's possible, for instance, for us to go to church and gather together... what a great day that's going to be when we do that again! We can gather together and sing some wonderful songs about loving God and just get caught up in the music and the flow and the emotion that we feel in the room. We feel really warm in our heart toward God. We feel stirred. And immediately after that worship service, someone might ask, "Do you love God?" And we'd say, "Yes, with all my heart," because that sentiment, that emotion has been stirred. Then we leave that worship service and go out and continue living in disobedience; open, active, willful disobedience. Friends, that's a great deception because the truth is, regardless of our affirmations of how much we love God, if that is true, we do not love God if we do not obey Him. Jesus says this:

John 14:15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments . . .

He goes on to say,

John 15:14 You are My friends if you do what I command you.

Let me use an illustration. Imagine that there's a neighbor that does a nice turn for you. Maybe he mows your lawn. And in a moment of sentiment you say, "I love you, brother! You're the best! You're the best neighbor!" But then you go on to take tools out of his garage without his permission. You kick his dog. You cut down his tree. You throw egg on his windows. Will he believe that you really love him? Of course not! Because it's your actions that matter the most; not a language of sentiment. Love for God always obeys Him. It's that simple.

So I ask you, do you love God? If so, it's because God has placed His life in your soul. So let's praise Him for that. And then let's feed this love for God through active obedience to His commands. I want to park for a moment on this little statement in verse 3,

And his commandments are not burdensome.

I love that! It simply means that the person who loves God sees God's commands differently from the person who does not love God. The person who doesn't have the life of God in their soul looks at commands and they think of them as sort of these dull, maybe even painful hindrances to purpose, to joy, to pleasure. They may even say that these commandments are necessary, but they're a bit irritated by them. Their view is to look for ways to either change them or alter them, for them to say something other than what they actually say. And if it's not possible to change them, they look for loopholes, for ways to sort of get around them. To use 60's language, such a person would say, "God's commandments are a real drag, man."

How different is the person who possesses the life of God! A child of God knows that life, purpose and joy are all bound up in God. God's commandments represent God's kind words to mark out a path that leads us toward blessing. A child of God knows that getting off that path leads us away from light, away from life. It leads us to regret and sorrow and tragedy and loss. And so we see these commands as helpful markers to keep us on the path, which is a path that leads us to joy. It's a path that leads us to the place we want to go. Let me use an illustration.

When I was a youth pastor, I was leading some junior higher's out in Colorado, through these mountains. I'd never been in this place before and I wasn't an avid outdoorsman. But I was given the responsibility and given a map. And then I was told that we're going to go to this place. It was several miles. I don't know, four or five miles away. There were going to be these markers on these trees that they have set up. So I was told to look for those markers and then follow that path. Wherever the path divides, look for the marker and then take the path that the marker represents. So the place we wanted to go was a place where they were going to have food. There was going to be a whole bunch of other people. There was going to be all these provisions. I needed to get us to this place. It was late in the afternoon, the sun was setting, and here I was with these junior higher's. So along the path, do you know what I was looking for? I was looking for markers. I did not want to get off the path and stay the night in some dark place where there was no food and where we were just in this wilderness area. I was looking for markers. When I found a marker, I'd say, "Yeah!" And occasionally, because there was some distance between these markers, I'd say, "Am I on the right path?" and I'd get a little nervous. Then I'd see a marker and there would be great joy at seeing the marker.

Let me ask you, do you think those markers were burdensome to me because they told me the path I must go in? No! They were great, great gifts to me because they lead me to a place that I wanted to go. I didn't look at those markers and say, "Those markers are keeping us from the fun of exploring new places." No, I looked at them and thought, "Those markers are helping us get to a place where there is going to be food and provision and joy."

A Christian is on a journey toward an eternal destination. That's who we are. We recognize that. God has secured that destination for us, and He points us on the path toward it. The markers on the path are called commandments. To the person who has the life of God in their soul, those commandments are not burdensome. The person who does not have the life of God looks at those markers and resents them because they don't know the Person who placed them there and they think they represent hindrances to keep them from a place of joy. God's commandments are not burdensome because we know He is the one who placed those markers on the path that we're walking. He is a good, good Father and He places them on the path to lead us to eternal glory.

Have you ever been discouraged, thinking that the path of obedience is too hard? Just because God's commandments are not burdensome doesn't mean that the path they mark is easy. Sometimes the path they mark is directly uphill and we have another choice. We can go downhill. It's a lot easier path. It looks more fun. But if God's commandments say go up the hill, it's not easy but it's not a burden. So this third value of faith is about encouragement when obedience is hard. So, authentic faith reveals regeneration. Authentic faith joyfully obeys God's commandments. And the third value is

Value #3: Authentic Faith overcomes the world.

4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

You see, Jesus is the Conqueror. He is the Victor. He has crushed Satan under His feet through His death on the cross. And what faith does is it grabs hold of Jesus, who is the victory. Faith of itself is weak. It is impotent. But faith, when it latches onto Jesus, then creates a victory. His victory that has been won on the cross through His death, burial, and resurrection becomes our victory. And here, John recognizes that there is a war. He says

4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world.

In other words, the world is not a friend to a person who is pursuing God and His glory. Earlier, John talked about that. He said

1 John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or 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 desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

The world has no future! “The world” here is used to refer to the human culture or system that rejects God's rule, rejects the markers along the path. It's hostile toward God and resentful toward Him. This world system has values all its own. It has pleasures, priorities, desires, truths, goals. And the world seeks to wrestle control of the whole

universe and everybody in it, including us. So there is pressure and it fights against us when we follow God's path, when we follow God.

If we are to win this battle against the world, first, we have to fight. But when we fight, we fight with a certainty that Jesus has won the battle for us. We're not fighting a losing battle. So let's not get discouraged. I know it seems like the world is so strong. I know it seems like Satan or sin is so overwhelming, but it's not. Not when we have Christ. The enemy is strong, but Jesus is stronger.

Faith is the key to winning this fight against this present world. We don't win because we have a better strategy in fighting or because we have better programs in the church or better efforts. We win through feeding faith that holds on to Jesus. Faith is the victory. Faith holds onto Jesus and to His victory. And as we fight, let's not get discouraged, John says. It's easy to think, "Oh man! I failed at this point in my battle against sin and the world, so I am just a big loser and I'm not ever going to get victory." John points us to Christ and says, "No, you already have the victory. Fight this battle as though the victory has been won!"

You know, I actually have not missed sports very much during this season. But occasionally, I go on to ESPN and they have these old reruns of former games. I've watched a couple of them. I love the Chicago Bulls in the 90's, when they were winning all those championships. So I see there's an old game on from the 90's, or it's the Bulls in the final championship. I first look to see whether they won because I don't want to watch a game to watch my favorite team lose. Okay, they won. I might watch some of this. And especially during the fourth quarter, I'm watching the game and I see the Bulls get down some points. It looks like, "Oh man! It's going to be impossible for them to pull out." Why do I keep watching? I watch because I know that they're going to win. I don't get discouraged when calls go against them in the fourth quarter or when they miss a basket or they make a blunder. I continue to cheer. I continue to smile. And why is that? Because I know that at the end, they win the game. And that's what John is saying here in this world. We're in the present moment, but the end is so certain it's as though it has already happened. Paul would say it this way.

Romans 8:37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

We hold onto Jesus. We know His victory is ours, and that makes all the difference. The righteous shall live by faith. But here also, the righteous shall prevail by faith. So let's fight against the world's pressure knowing that Jesus has already won the victory for us.

So what is the value of authentic faith? Well, it reveals regeneration. It joyfully obeys God's commands. It overcomes the world. Last, and we'll go through this really quickly.

Value #4: Authentic Faith trusts God's testimony about His Son.

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.

Do you see how often the words “testify” and “testimony” are found here in these four verses? John is taking us to a courtroom scene, and he says that one thing that authentic faith does is it listens to the testimony God gives. It doesn’t listen to the testimony of the world. It embraces that testimony and then it’s calmed, it’s strengthened by that testimony.

John calls three witnesses to the witness stand. He first calls the water. I think this is when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. The Holy Spirit descended as a dove and the Father’s voice spoke from heaven saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” John is saying that really happened. There are eyewitnesses and we have a reliable, historical record of that. Think of that and what God did there to give testimony that His Son is His Son, that He is the Messiah.

And then there is the blood. I believe that’s the testimony of Jesus’ crucifixion. God brings the crucifixion front and center to testify to us. Look at all that happened on the cross; what Jesus did, what Jesus said, how the Father responded, how the curtain of the temple was torn in two miraculously. Look at how the resurrection occurred. The grave was empty. Consider all of that. That is testimony about who Jesus is.

So we have testimony from water, Jesus’ baptism. We have miraculous testimony from the blood, Jesus crucifixion. And then we have testimony from the Holy Spirit. Look at Jesus’ miracles. They could only have been done by the power of the Holy Spirit. But also consider the testimony that the Holy Spirit has given through the prophets and through the apostles. John was in that Upper Room in John 16 where Jesus promised

John 16:13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth,

So when we open up the Scriptures, this is not just the word of man about God. It’s the word of God for us. So here’s the deal. You believe people who lie and who are faulty when there are three witnesses who are testifying to the same thing. Why don’t you believe God? Who are you going to believe? That’s the ultimate question that we have to ask. Authentic faith believes God’s testimony. That’s the point.

10 Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself.

In other words, it’s placed inside of us now.

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.

Now this is really important! Some in the church who begin to wander away from the faith sometimes say something like, "I'm not rejecting God. I'm not even really rejecting Jesus. I'm just asking new questions." And to that, John replies that is not what is happening here. Authentic faith that has been granted as a result of regeneration trusts God's testimony about His Son. It may seem like a small step that you're taking, but know that it's a giant leap. If you do not accept God's testimony today about Jesus, what is happening? John says this, and it's striking. He says you are calling God a liar! He does that to awaken us to see the danger of wandering in our faith.

11 And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

And John says this in verse 12 so sweetly.

12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Eternal life is a free gift. It's received by faith in Jesus Christ. And so I ask you: Have you believed in the Son, Jesus Christ, who died upon the cross for your sin? He who believes in the Son has life. It's that simple. And he who does not believe in the Son of God does not have life. So I call you to believe. Believe today!

Our faith is such a precious gift! I think that's John's point. So let's receive that gift as a stewardship. Let's feed it. Let's protect that faith. Let's care for that faith. Let's not treat our faith like it's not under assault or not under attack. Let's not treat our faith like it can't ever grow weaker or it can't ever falter. Treat our faith like a precious gift, like a tender, precious plant that as it grows, it will produce sweet, sweet fruit. It will produce fruit that is amazing and that offers life and joy to everything. We'll never regret it when we feed our faith. Here's what Paul says at the end of his life.

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

He's saying this as a mark of victory that God gave him in his life. "I have kept the faith. So here is what is going to happen now."

2 Timothy 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Faith is the victory that overcomes the world!