

## RCC in the Word Week of January 28 1 John 5

To the world, faith is something that is fun and entertaining, an escape from reality- a fantasy world. Faith is a diversion from what is really happening in the world. It makes us feel good. It brings joy. Children believe in Santa and the Easter bunny. Mystics believe in the power of crystals and incense. Crazy people believe in unicorns and fairies. Christians believe in Jesus. To some Christians, faith is nothing more than a spiritual experience, a prayer, walking an aisle. Some view faith like a type of “Jesus-consciousness,” or an intuition, a feeling, a supernatural sense. So, what is faith? How does the Bible describe faith? From verses 1-12 we can define faith as grace-given belief in the life-giving Savior leading to a holy life.

Three times in verses 1-12, John speaks of belief. *Everyone who believes* (v1). *The one who believes* (v5). *Whoever believes* (v10). In the Bible, belief is presented as a two-sided coin. On one side of the coin is confession. On the other side of the coin is trust. In 1 John, belief is related to the confession side of the coin. John writes in 2.23: *Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also*. He writes in 4.15: *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God...* Christian faith is an acknowledgement of the truth regarding Jesus Christ. But, faith is more than acknowledgment of truth. The other side of the belief coin can be trust, reliance, dependence. Belief is confessing the truth AND trusting the object of that truth – Jesus – to save you from your sins.

This belief is not something we can create or produce in ourselves. John writes in verse 1: *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God*. Notice the verb tenses. *Everyone who believes* - present tense indicating a continuous, ongoing action. *Has been born of God* – past tense. The person who believes now was at one time in the past born again. It is impossible to believe if you are not born of God. Spiritual birth precedes belief.

Three times in this passage John says: the one who believes, the one who believes, whoever believes. We must believe. Until God moves on us by his Spirit and we are born of God, we can do nothing. But, at the exact moment the Holy Spirit gives us new life, we will believe.

Christian faith is grace-given belief, and the object of this belief is Jesus, the life-giving Savior. In verse 1 John says: *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ*. In verse 5 belief is in *Jesus the Son of God*. Christian faith is always in Jesus. He is the one who came by water and the blood (v6). Jesus came by water to identify with the sinners through baptism. Jesus came by blood to atone for sinners through his death. By identifying with us and dying for us, Jesus gives life to all who believe. As verses 11-12 say: *This is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life*.

As we have seen throughout 1 John, grace-given belief in the life-giving Savior leads to a holy life. So, it comes as no surprise that the theme of obedience appears again in this final chapter. *For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments* (v3). Let’s be honest. The thought of keeping God’s commandments seems overwhelming. How can we possibly do this? We know we will fail to obey perfectly and the weight of this can crush our spirit. crushing. In verse three it seems John anticipated our response, our objections to obedience. He says: *and, his commandments are not burdensome*. Umm... how is that? John must be living in a dream world. We can’t escape the burden of these

commands. That's right. We can't. In our flesh, we object to them. We try to find a way out of them. We push up against them.

In verses 4-5 John explains why the commands of God are not a burden for those who believe. *For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?* The commandments of God are not burdensome for the child of God, the one born of God because we have overcome the world. In the world, there is no love of God or desire to obey him. The world is characterized by its opposition to the gospel, opposition to Christ, opposition to holiness. The world refuses to submit to the rule and reign of God. By our new birth as children of God, we have been taken out of the world, out of the kingdom of Satan. We belong to the Kingdom of God. We are part of God's family. The spell of the old life is broken. The fascination of the world has lost its appeal. New birth has double result of detaching us from the world and attaching us to God. Those who are born of God are no longer captive to the flesh and have been freed to live in a way that pleases God. God's commandments are not burdensome because we have overcome the world.

In the New Covenant promise of Jeremiah 31, God says he will write the law on the hearts of his people. At the moment of spiritual birth, God does this supernatural tattooing of the law on our hearts. This is not done with needle and ink but by God's very Spirit. The law of God is no longer offensive to us. We delight to obey God's commands. When we read his commands in the Bible, the Holy Spirit convicts us in areas of disobedience, assures us of forgiveness in Christ, then gives us the desire and power to obey. With the law written on our hearts, we are submissive to the law. We do not resist. We agree with Jesus: My yoke is easy and my burden is light. We agree with John: *his commandments are not burdensome*. God's commands are now our happy choice

What is faith? Christian faith is a grace-given belief in the life-giving Savior leading to a holy life. Is this the faith that you possess?

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