

What They Haven't Got

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[0 : 01] But we're going to turn now to our Bibles. We're reading this evening, and once again, in the first letter of John, first epistle of John, that's very near the end of the New Testament, just a little bit before Revelation, three little letters of John.

And Josh Johnson has been leading us through this letter in recent weeks. So we're coming to the last portion of the letter this evening. We're going to read from chapter 5, verse 4.

Through to the end of the chapter. 1 John then, chapter 5, and beginning halfway through verse 4. John says, 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?

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.

[1 : 10] For there are three that testify. The Spirit and the water and the blood. And these three agree. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.

For this is the testimony of God that he is born concerning his Son. 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 born concerning his Son. And 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.

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. And this is the confidence that we have toward him.

[2 : 15] 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.

If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask. And God will give him life. To those who commit sins that do not lead to death.

There is a sin that leads to death. I do not say one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin. But there is a sin that does not lead to death.

We know that everyone who has been born of God does not sin. But he who was born of God protects him. And the evil one does not touch him.

We know that we are from God. The whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true.

[3 : 27] And we are in him who is true. In his son, Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourself from idols.

Amen. And may God bless to us his word. Amen. On our journey through it.

Owing to its non-linear structure. And so it can be a little more difficult to get our heads around. So we are going to be returning one more time to this letter in a few weeks.

So that we can draw together the main ideas and the main message of this letter. To let it really sink in. And to have its effect as we live in the midst of the challenges that face us in this age.

This letter has a lot to say to us for that. Now, I'm sure we haven't missed the starkness of the picture that John paints throughout this letter.

[4 : 36] Look with me at verse 19. John says the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

John has been showing us that reality in this passing world is not a bed of ruses. We've seen that the true people of God will be faced with hatred, abandonment, attempts to deceive.

And a competing or seemingly superior Jesus put towards us. And this is compounded by the reality that there will be some who have known the truth about Jesus.

And who have served his church. Who in the end will not just abandon him and his church. But will seek to pull others into the abyss with them.

And that can create a perplexing struggle to know what is true and right. Isn't there a human instinct, a feeling that easily catches hold of us. That when things are hard, when it's a real struggle, we begin to think that something must be wrong.

[5 : 46] Something must be wrong with me. With us. We aren't doing things right. It can be easy for us to dwell on all that assails us. To dwell on the obstacles and the opponents that we face.

And seemingly the great advantage that they hold over us. But John's conclusion in this letter turns all these things around. By making plain all that is stacked against the departed.

He lays before us some key things that we do have. Some key things that ought to grant us reassurance. Of a measure that far outweighs the challenges we face.

There are three great reassurances that John brings out. Things that are possessed by those who trust the biblical gospel. The message of the apostles. And there are three things that nobody else has.

Three things that the departed don't have. And each reassurance starts with that phrase. And this is the... You see it in verse 4. And this is the...

[6 : 53] Verse 11. And this is the... And again in verse 14. Three great reassurances. The first, verse 4. And this is the victory.

First thing we see this evening. Victory over the world. In verses 4 to 10. Victory over the world. Despite appearances, faithful churches have all that ultimately matters.

Believing in Jesus really does give us victory. Look at verse 4. And this is the victory that has overcome the world.

The victory and overcoming word is used throughout this letter. And it's the same Greek word that they come from in our translation. It's the third time John talks about overcoming as an important idea.

And when he's spoken about it previously, he says in chapter 4 verse 4. That those who continue with the apostles have overcome the false prophets. Because God's spirit within them is more powerful than any other thing that is at work.

[8 : 07] Overcoming victory means not falling for the delusion and the deception. Not being duped by promises and claims about Jesus that offer less than Jesus.

Or Jesus plus something else. Or a different Jesus. John says overcoming victory is seeing through what is false despite its allure.

Back in chapter 2 verses 12 to 14. The heart of this letter. John says that victory is overcoming the evil one. Because your sins are forgiven.

Having come to know the real Jesus. So when John talks about victory, about overcoming. He means not being captive to the evil one. And his deceptive destroying works.

Victory is holding on to the truth. Despite many deceptions. Victory is receiving from the real Jesus. A hole that we need to deal with our sin.

[9 : 11] Well how is such victory given to us? What is it that enables God's spirit to dispel Satan's darkness and deception? What is it that sees our sins forgiven? Verse 4.

John says it is our faith. And this isn't vague faith. Believing in something. In anything. Being a spiritual person.

Someone with interest in faith. No. Verse 5. Who is it that overcomes the world? Except the one who believes that Jesus is the son of God.

John uses statements like that throughout the letter as shorthand. Do you believe that Jesus is the son of God? The Christ? Is he the real historical Jesus?

The coming one who was long expected by the prophets? The one who has come. Taking on flesh. Fulfilling the law. Being crucified. Being raised. So that the apostles saw and heard and touched him.

[10 : 17] And John goes on to spell out who this Jesus is. And what his significance is. Verse 6. Verse 6 is a verse that's led to much speculation. What on earth does John mean by the water and the blood?

Well John's continuing his flow of thought isn't he? Verse 4. Our faith. Which verse 5 is in Jesus the son of God. And verse 6. He is the one who came by water and blood.

Jesus the Christ. And so John is explaining something of the one we have faith in. He's explaining what is so significant about Jesus' work.

And the purpose of his coming. So what does John mean by water and blood? Well notice verse 6. A key detail John gives us is that Jesus came not by the water only.

But by the water and the blood. To understand this we need to look at three brief passages in John's gospel. Do turn back to John's gospel.

[11 : 23] John chapter 1. But keep your finger in 1st John. We'll be coming back. John chapter 1. Verse 26.

As we're prepared for Jesus and introduced to him. John uses the phrase by water three times. 1st verse 26. John answered them.

I baptize by water. But among you stands one you do not know. Even he who comes after me. John baptizes by water.

But someone more significant will follow. The coming one is coming. Verse 31. John. I myself did not know him.

But for this purpose I came baptizing by water. That he might be revealed to Israel. John's use of water is in some way preparatory for Jesus.

[12 : 33] And then verse 33. I myself did not know him. But he who sent me to baptize by water said to me. He on whom you see the spirit descend and remain.

This is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. So John links baptism with water to the Holy Spirit.

Second passage right at the end of John's gospel. John 19. John 19. Verse 34.

And at Jesus' death we read. One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear. And at once there came out blood and water.

Jesus' death had significance beyond just his blood. And final brief passage. John 7. Verses 37 to 39.

[13 : 45] John 7. 37 to 39. Jesus says. If anyone thirsts. Let him come to me. And drink. Whoever believes in me.

As the scripture has said. Out of his heart will flow rivers of living. Water. Now this Jesus said about the spirit. Whom those who believed in him were to receive.

For as yet the spirit had not been given. Because Jesus was not yet glorified. Jesus is saying that he is the source of living water.

He is the rock from which Israel drank and drinks. Jesus was the one who would give the spirit to God's people. But notice. Not until he is glorified.

In John's gospel. Jesus' glorification is his death on the cross. And so at Jesus' death. Out from his side flew not just blood. Not just the blood that washes away sin.

[14 : 48] But the living water of the spirit. So it is because of Jesus' death. That God's spirit would then come to the church. The life-giving spirit of Christ.

Comes to the church. And makes effective. The resurrection life of Christ. To his people. Listen to Sinclair Ferguson on this.

He says. Christ as crucified. Will give the spirit. From his side both water and blood flew. The blood of forgiveness. The water of the spirit.

Only as the crucified one. Can he give the messianic spirit. Christ's death is to be seen both as a sacrifice for sins. The blood.

And as the means by which the water of new life in the spirit flew to us. The water. Well back to 1 John. Not the water only.

[15 : 50] But the water and the blood. Because without the blood. The water of the spirit couldn't come. Any talk of the spirit.

That is not tied to Jesus' death. Is not the spirit of God. I wonder if the departed in their great claims. We're happy to talk about the spirit stuff.

Water only stuff. But that their spirituality was unhitched from Jesus' death. Remember they claim in some way to be without sin.

To have some sort of greater purity. And we see that kind of idea play out all the time. Don't we? People being ashamed of what the Bible calls sin.

Whatever the issue of the day is. We need to reinterpret the Bible. So that it doesn't clash. Or people who like to talk about hearing a new message of the spirit. One for our day.

[16:52] That just so happens to change what the scripture says. We're being ashamed of a God who must judge. We're being ashamed of a savior who had to die on a cross.

Well John says our faith is in the Jesus who died to wash away our sin through his blood. And our faith is in the Jesus who quenches our thirst for God.

Our faith is in the one who breathes life into us by his spirit. So that we are, verse 20, In him who is true. Joined to him in his son Jesus Christ.

Filled with the resurrection power of Jesus. And so John says that if we want to know the real Jesus. And what he came to do. We have three things to look to.

Verses 7 and 8. And they all agree. There's the water which speaks of Jesus' spirit baptizing ministry. The ministry of breathing life into the spiritually dead.

[17:58] There's the testimony of the spirit himself. And the blood which speaks of Jesus' sin bearing death. All these things speak of the same thing.

The ministry of the spirit and the ministry of Jesus cannot be separated or detached. From Jesus' sin bearing death on the cross. Well with all of that.

John hasn't really landed his punch shit. Look at verse 9. If we receive the testimony of men. Which we do. Receiving John's testimony and the other apostles who've seen, heard and touched Jesus.

If we receive that. How much more should we receive the testimony of God? Which is far greater. The water. The water. The water.

And the blood. And the spirit. In verse 9. They are the testimony of God. That he has borne. Concerning his son. John is saying.

[19:02] That it is God himself. Who makes clear who Jesus is. And what he's done. It is God himself. Who explains the significance. Of what Jesus has done in history.

Because it isn't the fact. Of Jesus' life. Death and resurrection. That matters. It's the significance of them. And it's God. Who declares their significance.

James Phillips says. We should not miss the tremendous significance of this. For it means. That when a man preaches a true biblical message. God himself speaks in it.

And it becomes the word of God. To those who hear it. Well verse 10. To take any other Jesus. Is to make God a liar.

To minimize the real Jesus. Atoning work. Is to call God a liar. Because he's the one who testifies. To what Jesus has done. Again 5.10.

[20:07] Whoever sees in Jesus. The one who saves them from sin. And brings new life to them. They have God's gospel word in them. They have the faith that will be victorious.

Friends. Do you feel victorious? I'm sure many of us don't. In the midst of the dark world that we live in. And the various hardships it brings.

We can long for some sense of victory. Whose experience of coming to faith is one that they would design? Was it through the perfect church? Was it through the perfect church?

Listening to the perfect sermon? Was it in the midst of a family that brought you up in the faith? A family that had every sign of being spiritual giants?

I suspect for most of us. Not all of us. That's not the case. Who of us pars through every day doing wonderful works for God.

[21:07] Above and beyond. Winning hundreds of people to his kingdom. I wonder if we could speak to Christians from every century. Whether any of them would say that they lived at the perfect time for the church.

Was theirs the time that the church was utterly in the groove. Free from division. Free from political and social turmoils and pressures. And just so on course with being victorious and riding high.

I wonder what they'd say. Was theirs the time? I doubt it. The victory we have is not by feeling stronger or looking stronger and projecting strength.

We don't will victory for ourselves. Brothers and sisters. What is enough to overcome the enslaving power of the evil one?

What is enough to overcome this world that's under the rule of Satan? What's enough for us to overcome until the very end the messengers of untruth?

[22:12] What is enough for us to remain and abide and continue? Even though this world is full of hardships and heartbreaks and hostility. What is enough to share with others?

To rescue them from destruction? It is nothing more than verse 10. Believing in the Son of God.

Our faith in Jesus Christ is victory over the world. And our faith in Jesus can sustain us through anything that this world can throw at us.

Anything. Do you believe that? John says, he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. So what does a victorious church look like? It looks like a church that holds on tightly to the faith once for all entrusted to the saints.

[23 : 12] It looks like a church that won't let go of the real Jesus. Nothing more and nothing less than that.

John says, be reassured. We have victory. The second great reassurance of what we have and what the departed don't.

Verses 11 to 13. Eternal life. Eternal life. God's testimony, his gospel, gives eternal life.

What God has said really has changed everything. Verse 11. And this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life.

And this life is in his Son. Something that God's people have that the world doesn't have. Eternal life.

[24 : 13] That's quite a striking thing for John to say, to reassure with. Because remember what he said about the world. Remember what he said about the darkness.

They are passing away. They are passing away. Time limited. They will end. They'll run out. They'll stop. They'll cease. They'll be overcome.

But not so those who remain. And abide and continue with the apostles. What they have will not pass away.

For it is eternal. Unconstrained by time. Outside of it. Everlasting. And it is life that will be untouched. Untainted.

Unspoiled. By death. Notice what John says about eternal life. It isn't a fluted thing that's given to us.

[25 : 10] Eternal life is found only in Jesus. Because 520. Jesus is the true God and eternal life.

Jesus is eternal life. Similarly we read this eternal life at the very start of this letter.

Chapter 1 verse 2. 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. And what the apostles saw and testified to. Was the resurrected Jesus. They had seen and heard and touched.

The imperishable resurrection body of Jesus. The body and the life which will last forever. Jesus is eternal life.

[26 : 08] And so being in relationship with Jesus. Is enjoying the life of the age to come. Being in relationship to Jesus. Is eternal life. It has begun.

And we most certainly enjoy it now. In union with him through his spirit. We have eternal life now. But we will one day enjoy it unfettered.

We will enjoy relationship with Jesus by sight. When darkness and the world have passed away. Verse 12. Whoever has the son.

Has life. Whoever does not have the son of God. Does not have life. Those who abandon the real Jesus. The Jesus of the Bible.

Those who refuse him. Well there is no life in that. And so all that there is. Is passing away. But here is an important implication.

[27 : 07] Church. In and of itself. Doesn't equal eternal life. For those who are becoming members tonight. There is no magic in that.

Eternal life doesn't come to any of us. Through a church's innovation. A church just being a church. In name and in building. Doesn't mystically confer grace upon us. A church on its own.

Isn't the answer to all of our needs. There is eternal life. Eternal life. Eternal life. Given from God himself. And it isn't beyond any of us.

Who are gathered here this evening. Eternal life comes through Jesus alone. All we can do is point to him. Show people the real Jesus.

In the Bible. And in meeting with that Jesus. People encounter eternal life. Now I notice John. Doesn't say that it is.

[28 : 05] Merely the prospect of eternal life to come. He says verse 12. Whoever has Jesus. Has life. 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. It begins. Now. When we're helped. Through all kinds of things.

That might seem beyond us. When we're able to leave behind. Previous habits of sin. When we meet tragedy with a steel. That we never thought we'd have. When we find our hearts.

Opened to exceeding generosity. Towards God. Their time and our treasure. That is enjoying something. Of the life of the age to come. That is Jesus.

Life at work within us. We can know life with Jesus now. But we do so also patiently waiting. For the unveiling of it.

[29 : 03] In visible ways. Before our very eyes. In full and complete ways. But it is still ours now. The answer to any deep longing.

To any deep aching. Of unfulfilled purpose and desire. The answer is Jesus. The testimony of the gospel. The truth revealed by God himself.

Does something. It opens up the way to eternal life. Not passing life. Not passing away life. Eternal life. Through believing in Jesus.

That's the second. Great reassurance. The third and final one. Verses 14 to 21. Confidence. In our relationship with God.

Confidence in our relationship with God. We have a God. Who is ready and willing to hear. And to help us. And our brothers and sisters.

[30 : 04] God really does hear us. And will grant our prayers. He isn't far off on a lift. No. John began his letter in chapter one.

By saying that. Through believing the apostles gospel. We're brought into a relational network. That includes the apostles. But also includes relationship with the father. And with Jesus.

John said. We the apostles proclaim to you. So that you too may have fellowship with us. The apostles. And indeed our fellowship. Is with the father. And his son Jesus Christ.

We really do. Have relationship with the Godhead. And the departed do not. Falling for another Jesus. Or abandoning or ignoring the real Jesus.

Robes people. Of the one relationship that truly matters. God created and sustains this whole universe. He made us.

[31 : 06] And yet look at what John says. He doesn't say we cower before him. He doesn't say we are but as specks of whatever before him. He doesn't say we have to go to immense efforts to be brought into his presence.

Now verse 14. John says that we have confidence toward him. A confidence that means we can ask anything. And he hears us.

Not anything in a kind of carte blanche way. In which we can literally pray and ask and expect. You know God give me a million pounds. Make me 20 pounds lighter. Whatever it is.

Look at what John says. If we ask anything according to his will. He hears us. In verse 15. Just as he hears us.

He also grants requests. When it comes to the things that actually matter in this world. Our ultimate purpose. Our battle with all kinds of sin.

[32 : 04] The struggles we have living in this dark world. The hatred we face. The falsehood that is all around us. The want and need to know the real Jesus. The struggle it can be to love our brothers and sisters.

God hears and grants our requests for help. There is help for us. For we have the ear of the sovereign. And he isn't begrudging toward us.

But John takes this confidence. And the privilege of prayer. And applies it in a particular way. He says we can pray for a struggling brother. And God will grant life.

Now in verses 16 to 18. John talks about sin. Sin that leads to death. And sin that doesn't lead to death. Now we might find that a little bit confusing.

But I think what John is saying is rather reassuring. I take it that the sin which leads to death. In the context of this letter. Is the sin that comes from departing.

[33 : 11] From the relational network of the apostles. apostles and the Godhead. Willfully and knowingly rejecting Jesus. The departed claim to have no sin.

And when people talk like that. It's a depressing thing for any believer to hear. Isn't it? When someone talks about their great success. In conquering sin. When they talk about their great spiritual vitality.

That means they're not tempted to do anything wrong. If you're anything like me. That's just depressing. That's so far from me. But in truth.
It's so far from anyone who belongs to the Lord. John says we deceive ourselves if we talk like that. The Christian's hope for sin is. It isn't that we can leave it behind in this body.
Totally freed from its presence in this life. No the Christian's hope for sin. Is that Jesus' blood washes it away. That he is our advocate. Our propitiation. So John is clear.
[34 : 12] Faithful believers are not perfect believers. Faithful believers. Know what it is to ask for forgiveness. What it is to receive forgiveness. So I don't think that.

John can be talking about sin. In a general way. Of course we know that. The wages of sin is death. But John's writing to a believing church. You have an advocate with the father.
And if we're in Christ. Then the wages of sin. Been paid by Christ's death. The departed claim no sin.
But by doing so. They've called God a liar. The sin which leads to death. Is departing from the real Jesus. Hardening our hearts.
So completely against him. That we take what he calls sin. And we call it good. That we take any other Jesus. But the real one.
[35 : 10] That's what we find similarly in the gospels. The unforgivable sin. Is ultimately. To reject the one. Whom the spirit testifies to. The Lord Jesus.

Now John says verse 16. I do not say that one should pray. For the one whose sin leads to death. And he's making clear. That he isn't commanding believers. To be burdened.
To pray unendingly. For those who have known Jesus. But have willfully run from him. And have obstinately. Hardened their hearts firmly against him. John doesn't forbid.
Praying for them. But perhaps there does come a point. When the dust may need to be shaken off. And where effort is directed. Towards those who want. And need it.
And so John's application. Of our confidence before God. And prayer. Is that we can and should. Ask the Lord to help our brothers and sisters. Who are battling against sin. The sin that doesn't lead to death.
[36 : 11] That is surely an important application. Of our brotherly love. Do you have a friend in church. Who's making a bit of a mess. Who's being unwise. Or who's confessed to your genuine struggle.

Can be tempting to talk about such things. But gossip isn't brotherly love. But there is a kind of talk. That makes a real difference. Verse 16.
If anyone sees his brother committing a sin. Not leading to death. He shall ask. And God will give him life. There is a way to talk about our brothers and sisters sin.
Talk to God about it. We can love our brothers and sisters. By bringing their struggle with sin to the Lord. And he will hear and answer. We can be the means of a brother or sister.
Being wonderfully restored. Instead of being hardened forever. I take it that John's message here. For those who remain and abide and continue. Is that they can and should prayerfully support one another.
[37 : 16] To keep going. To continue with the apostles. And not to go with the departed. God can help the brother or sister.

Who might be on the way to wandering. We can bring them before the Lord. And he will give them life. Lord God. Help my brother. Stay the course with Jesus.
Let him not be swayed by an easier life now. Forgive him. And grant him life. Now. And on the last day. Lord God.
Help my sister whose tongue gets the better of her. Forgive her. And grant her life now. And on the last day. Lord God.
My dear brother has lost his joy and gladness in serving you. Soften his heart. And restore it to him. And give him life now. And on the last day. And God can do that.
[38 : 15] Because verse 18. Everyone who has been born of God. Does not sin. But he who was born of God. Protects him. Slightly clunky language.

But those who are born of God. That's us. Are protected. By the one who was born of God. Jesus. God can grant this prayer.
Because Jesus is presently our advocate in heaven. Because he has appeared once for all. At the end of the ages. To put away sin. By the sacrifice of himself.

Well John finishes this letter. With a succinct summary. Of what he has been teaching. Verse 19. That familiar reassurance.

We are from God. But be realistic. This world. Including the departed. Who have gone out. Are under the power of the evil one.

[39 : 18] That is what we do not have. We do not have the clutches of the evil one dominating us. They do. But verse 20.

We have understanding. We have understanding. To see through the deception and the darkness of this world. We have been given understanding to know the real Jesus. And so to be joined to him.

And to God. And to have eternal life. That's what they do not have. But what we have. And so John's closing words.

Little children. Keep yourselves from idols. Keep yourselves from perversions of Christ. From pretend Christ. From Christ plus something else.

John says. John lays before us. The immense benefits we have in Christ. The great reassurance is that.

[40 : 16] Our faith in Jesus is all the victory that we need. That the gospel gives us eternal life. And that we have a real relationship with the supreme God. Who hears and answers our cries for help.

For ourselves. And for one another. And so John says. Do not fall. For a different Jesus. Do not abandon the real one.

Keep yourselves from idols. And instead. Remain. Abide. And continue. In fellowship with the apostles.

And in fellowship with the father and his son. Jesus Christ. Let's pray. Heavenly father.

Grant us your grace. So that we might always be able to see clearly. All that you have given to us in your son. And that we may never be swayed by anything else.

[41 : 21] And grant us your grace. That we might see through all else. Seeing its emptiness. And seeing the fingerprints. Of the evil one. And we ask for your help.

In Jesus name. Amen.