

# He Who Has the Son Has Life

## 1 John 5:6-12

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Our text today is 1 John 5:6-12 and our truth today is that he who has the Son has life.

*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. 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 has borne 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 borne 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. (1 John 5:6-12 ESV)*

The repetition here is easy to see. John uses a form of the word *witness* or *testimony* no less than nine times in six verses. He is marching toward the end of the letter. These verses immediately precede the pinnacle and the most famous verse of the whole letter. It summarizes everything he has written: *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.* (1 John 5:13)

The emphasis is on knowing. Knowing what? Knowing that the result of believing in Jesus is eternal life. John has spent five chapters describing what spiritual life looks like. All this spiritual life evidences that we have experienced spiritual birth. John wants us to know that we have eternal life...for the right reasons; the right proofs. He is building a case.

This brings us to the whole matter of witnesses. In a legal court of law, what is a witness? A witness is someone who testifies about what they know or saw or heard. Their testimony is used to build a convincing legal argument. "Miss Scarlet, on the night of December 13<sup>th</sup>, did you or did you not see Colonel Mustard go into the billiard room carrying the candlestick saying that he was going to take care of Professor Plum once and for all?" A witness testifies to the truth as they see it. John calls on three witnesses to verify that Jesus is the Son of God and all who believe in him will have eternal life.

### **Witnesses to Jesus as 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.*

This is the most difficult passage in 1 John to interpret. In particular, to what is water and blood referring? Down through the centuries, the theology heavyweights have given their opinion. Among the propositions are: the elements of the Lord's Supper, the Old Testament sacrificial system of water purification and blood sacrifice, and even the water and blood that flowed from Jesus' side on the cross when he was pierced with the Roman spear. The majority of commentators go with water referring to Jesus' baptism and blood referring to Jesus' death.

## **Water=Jesus' baptism**

## **Blood=Jesus' death**

The reason most go with this is that we know John was dealing with a particularly nasty heresy in the church. This heresy said that Jesus was a man, a very good man, upon whom the spirit of Christ came. The appeal of this was that it avoided the difficulties of explaining God being born and the dual nature of Jesus as the God-man and if that spirit left before he died, you don't have God suffering or dying. It denied the incarnation, penal substitution, and Messianic death. It was a nasty heresy and one you would think Christians would never go for. But as we have seen, wolves always dress up in sheep's clothing. So does their doctrine.

How do the witnesses of water and blood answer that? His baptism began his ministry and the cross culminated it. They witness to the fact that it was the same Jesus on the cross as was in the water. He didn't become the Son of God or Messiah along the way, he always had been and it was the real Son of God who died on the cross.

## **The Holy Spirit**

The third witness is the Holy Spirit. *And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.* (Verse 6) How the Spirit testifies, he doesn't say. Most likely he is referring to the inner witness of the Holy Spirit within us; an inward confirmation of the truthfulness of the gospel that makes believing in Jesus a green light. This is a role of the Holy Spirit, to guide us in truth. *"But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me."* (John 15:26)

How do we come to see and believe that Jesus is Son of God and Savior of the world? It seems to us that it makes sense, or it is believable, or it is desirable—then we believe it. The compelling sermon or book or the words of a friend somehow move us from a place of ambivalence or ignorance to a place of active faith and trust.

But like someone who never looks under the hood of a car and just thinks cars go down the road, we can think we simply believe in the gospel and be saved. What is really happening under the hood is a divine work of God, in regenerating us, granting us faith, and the Holy Spirit testifying to our soul that Jesus is the Savior of the world.

John calls all three witnesses and says:

*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 has borne 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 borne concerning his Son. (1 John 5:7-10)*

These three witnesses, the water, the blood, and the Spirit, are essentially speaking on behalf of God himself regarding the identity of Jesus. To ignore them or to deny them is to deny what God himself says about Jesus. Verse 10 says it is to call God a liar.

I read a story about four high school boys who were late to their morning classes one day. They entered the classroom and solemnly told their teacher they were detained due to a flat

tire. The sympathetic teacher smiled and told them it was too bad they were late because they had missed a test that morning. But she was willing to let them make it up. She gave them each a piece of paper and a pencil and sent them to four corners of the room. Then she told them they would pass if they could answer just one question: *Which tire was flat?* If all four were in agreement, that would be a compelling argument that there really was a flat tire and they were late because of it.

Baptism. Cross. Holy Spirit. God Himself. These four are testifying to the identity and ministry of Jesus as Son of God and Savior of the World. That testimony is recorded for us in Holy Scripture and the opportunity to believe is available to all. The question is, do you believe them? Or are all four of them liars?

The implications are severe and John uses them to draw a very sharp and important line in the sand: *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.* (1 John 5:11-12) There is no verse in all of Scripture that is both more wonderful and more terrifying than this one: *Whoever has the Son has life; does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

### **What Does it Mean to “Have the Son” and “Have Life”?**

By this point in our study of John’ letter, I hope you understand the code. “Son” is Jesus. “Life” is eternal life. The simplicity of this statement is the linking of having the Son with having eternal life. To get the one is to have the other. To not have the Son is to not have life. To have Jesus means that I have accessed eternal life that is only found in him. I have personally believed and trusted in him as the Son of God and Savior of the world.

So what does it mean to “have the Son”? This is a term of relationship. When I become a Christ-follower—when I trust in him—he becomes my Savior and I become his disciple. Like in a wedding, as those vows are made, the groom has the woman as his bride and the bride has the groom as her husband. They have each other. There is a union.

- *By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.* (1 John 4:13)
- *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* (Galatians 2:20)

By faith, I have Jesus. I have him relationally. And like a bride or groom, the relationship has realities that come along with it. His family is now her family. Her things are now his things. When I believe in Jesus, that relationship has other realities, other redeeming realities. I have the Holy Spirit, God the Father becomes my Father, and many other wonderful things.

But as dying people living in a dying world where the death rate is 100%, there may not be anything more wonderful than this, *Whoever has the Son has life.*

### **What is Eternal Life?**

For all our quoting of verses like John 3:16 about eternal life, do we really get what eternal life actually is?

## **The spiritual life and vitality of God within**

Many people simply think of God merely keeping you alive spiritually when you die. *It's just that I continue to exist.* Eternal life is much more than ongoing existence; it is the very life of God in us. It is given to us by the Holy Spirit when we believe in Jesus.

Romans 6:13 describes it as having been "brought from death to life." Remember, we are born spiritually dead. We are born without spiritual life. Through regeneration, God makes us alive with the life of God. That may sound strange because the modern man doesn't think this way. But remember in Genesis 2:7 when God made Adam, the text says that *the LORD God...breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.* What did God place in him? His "breath;" his life.

In salvation, God breathes life into us again, the very life of God. Through union with Christ, we are connected to this life of God. What can separate us from God and his love? Romans 8:39 tells us, *neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* We are in an indissoluble union with Christ. We *have* the Son. And with that "having," we have life. Since that relationship cannot be broken, we will be connected to this eternal source of life and vibrancy forever. His divine life eternally enlivens ours.

Let me illustrate it this way...A standard household lamp has the capacity for light, but unless you plug it in, it doesn't give light to anything. When you plug it in to a power source, it lights up. In a similar way, when we are born, we have the capacity for spiritual things, but we have no life on our own (a lamp not plugged in). When we place our faith in Jesus ("plug into" him), we suddenly are in union with Christ. And because of that union, we are now animated, enlivened; we have life (the light goes on). His life is our life. That life (the light) is still there (stays lit) when we die because it is *eternal* life (the power source, Christ, never dies).

## **The Christian's present possession**

1 John 5:12 says, *Whoever has the son has life.* Every word here is inspired and trustworthy. It doesn't say, *Whoever has the son will have life.* It is present tense, *has life.* If there is one misconception it is this one: eternal life is someday and is mostly about the duration of life; it never ends.

*Whoever has the Son has life.* If you are a Christian, you have the life of God now. God is certainly interested in your future experience of it. But it is a *now* experience. This new life is also eternal life. The same spiritual vibrancy that is sustaining me in trials and changing my sinful habits and delighting in God to worship and seeking to live to the glory of God and striving to love my neighbors, and seeking a God-centered home—that is the same life. New life is eternal life. Eternal life is transformational life. It is the joy and power of God at work within me.

*I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.* (John 10:10) The abundant life is eternal life, experienced now imperfectly because of our ongoing struggle with sin. But it is truly "abundant" in that it is a gift from God; a gift we will treasure forever.

## **The guarantee of unending life after physical death**

*Jesus said to [Martha], "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.* (John 11:25) We cannot talk about eternal life and not rejoice in

this truth. Not in a church that regularly is burying loved ones who die in the faith. Not in a group of people who know that someday it is our turn. *Jesus is the resurrection and the life.*

The promise is that we will die physically but we will never ever truly die. The real me, the me in terms of person, memories, heart, loves, passions; the me of a whole life lived, the real me will never end because I am united to Christ and his eternal life is my present possession.

### **A foretaste of the future kingdom and its indescribable joy**

When God the Father raised Jesus from the dead, it was the life of the eternal age invading this present world. Like a story in which a power from another world shows up in this world, the resurrection was a kind of portal from the future glorious world into this present one. It is this same life, this same portal, through which the Christian experiences life eternal in the present world. That is why we can say that we have it now but it's not all that it will be. The future life will be the same only greater and more wonderful. Fully expressed.

We have the seed. We have eternal life now. But what the full flower will be is far more beautiful and wonderful than our present experience of it. You just wait and see.

*Whoever has the son has life.* This verse is a verse of assurance, both for the saved and the lost. If you have the Son, you have eternal life now. If you do not, you do not.

There is assurance here as well for all who do not have the Son by faith. To not have the son is to not have life. We talk about assurance of salvation, perhaps we should talk as much about assurance of non-salvation or assurance of judgment. Verse 12 is very discriminatory. Jesus said as much in John 14:6, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

So this verse wonderfully reassures the believer in Jesus and also warns the unbeliever. Do not make God out to be a liar. Do not ignore his testimony or witnesses. And do not reject his Son; for if you do, there is not life eternal but eternal death, eternal destruction, eternal and unending misery. What is your spiritual condition?

While you are yet alive, the opportunity is there to spiritually plug in to the very life of God in Jesus. If the Apostle John was standing here, he would say, "My friends, believe. God loves you. I saw his love on display with my own eyes. I saw Jesus die. I saw him resurrected. What I am telling you is the truth. If you don't believe me, believe John the Baptist who baptized him. Believe the Romans who crucified him. Believe the water. Believe the blood. Believe those of us who witnessed his miracles and teaching. But most of all, believe God whose says through all creation and through his Word and by his Spirit, 'Believe in me and be saved from death and be saved unto life eternal.'"

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