

Obedience, belief, and love are the three tests that John has been repeating in various ways throughout this letter. In the first 5 verses of the last chapter we see these themes repeated again. A relationship with God will result in our obedience to His commands, faith in Jesus, and unselfish, sacrificial love for others. Each of these moral, doctrinal and societal proofs of being in God can't exist without the others. Each flows from the life of Christ in us. No one proof can truly exist without the others or independent of the Holy Spirit.

John is now showing us that the love for God and for one another is connected with belief and obedience. All of these evidences ("by this we know...") of being in God come from our new birth from above. That is the connecting factor. (1John 2:10-11)

¹ *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.* "To believe that Jesus is the Christ is to believe that He is the center and focus of revelation, that he was the One to whom the whole of the Old Testament looked forward, that he is the Eternal Son of God..." (Alexander Ross) who died and rose again to secure our salvation. "Believes" is present tense, meaning an action in progress and state of persistence. You are believing Jesus is the Christ. (John 1:12) These are they that are born of God. "Born of God" is the perfect tense. Your spiritual birth is a completed action with the results still in effect. You possess eternal life. And if you love the Father, you will love His children for they are your brothers and sisters, your spiritual family.

Not everyone in the family of God is as lovable as everyone else, but we don't love others because of their behavior, for that is not agape love. We love because of our relationship to the Father. We love because we choose to love those that our Father loves. We love because they are made in His image and are being restored into that image. We love because it is our Father's nature and His Spirit lives in us. If we only needed to love those who were already perfected, no one would love you or me. We should hate the old nature and its deeds that remain in others and in ourselves, but we will love the person that they are becoming in God. (1John 4:8)

² *This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.* Love for God and obedience to His commands is accompanied by sincere love for the brethren. (Matthew 12:50; John 8:31; 14:15) "It is as impossible to love the children of God, without loving God as it is to love God without loving His children." John R.W. Stott

Commented [notes1]: 1 John 2:10-11 (ESV)
10 Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.
11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Commented [notes2]: John 1:12 (ESV)
¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

Commented [notes3]: 1 John 4:8 (ESV)
8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Commented [notes4]: Matthew 12:50 (ESV)
50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

Commented [notes5]: John 8:31 (ESV)
31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,

Commented [notes6]: John 14:15 (ESV)
15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Remember, John summarized the commands of God as believing in Jesus and loving one another. (1John 3:23) However, consider the fact that Jesus taught that if you love God and your fellow man you have kept the Law, meaning the Laws of Moses. (Matthew 22:39-49) Love fulfills the Law. When we love we are carrying out God's commands.

Commented [notes7]: 1 John 3:23 (NIV)
23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

Carrying out His commands may also mean to obey His Spirit, the obedience of faith. (Romans 16:25-26) Obedience and love are also linked in 1Peter 1:22(NIV).
²² Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. Obedience and love will go hand in hand. They both flow from the work of the Spirit in our hearts.

Commented [notes8]: 1 John 3:23 (NIV)
23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

³ This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, Follow the flow of this; John has told us numerous times that we are in God if we love our brothers and sisters in Christ. In case we started wondering if we loved others enough, he stated in the last verse that we know we love one another because we love God and do what He commands. You can't love God and not love your brother. Now he reminds us that love for God is demonstrated by obeying His commands. Let me reword it to maybe help us get the flow of the thought. We know we love the brothers because we love God, and we know we love God because we do what He asks. (2John 1:6)

Commented [notes9]: Romans 16:25-26 (NIV)
25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,
26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him--

You don't obey someone unless you love them. Fear only results in a mock obedience when you are being watched. (Ephesians 6:6) My wife says, "Take me to Sam's Club." I love her so I say, "When would you like to go dear?" We are the bride of Christ. He says, "Help that person." We respond, "What do you want me to do Lord?" Hopefully the response is more enthusiastic and joyful than my response to the shopping request. We respond joyfully because we love Him. Do you obey Jesus? Then you know you love Him. If you love Him, you love His children and you do what He asks of you.

Commented [notes10]: 2 John 1:6 (ESV)
6 And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.

The things God asks us to do aren't burdensome. Unlike the burdens that the Pharisees placed on people by their additions to the Law (Matthew 23:6), Jesus said His yoke is easy and His burden is light. (Matthew 11:30) I hear people often say that to live a Christian life is difficult. No! To live under legalism is difficult. To try to be good without the power and motivation of the Spirit is hard. To walk in the Spirit is a joy. When we are born of God, we operate in His strength and find obeying Him to be a pleasure. Denying self even brings its own inner joy and is easy when we look to the Lord. (Matthew 16:25)

Commented [notes11]: Ephesians 6:5-6 (NIV)
5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.
6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

⁴ for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. The world is John's term for human society organized without God in which the lust of the flesh is at work. (1John 2:15-17) The world is selfishness, love for self above all else, and doing as you desire for momentary pleasure. Once again, please don't separate this verse from the flow of

Commented [notes12]: Matthew 23:4 (ESV)
4 They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.

Commented [notes13]: Matthew 11:30 (ESV)
30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Commented [notes14]: Matthew 16:25 (NIV)
25 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

Commented [notes15]: 1 John 2:15-17 (NIV)
15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
16 For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world.
17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

the passage. You believe Jesus is the Christ so you are born of God; you love God and love His children. Your love for God is evidenced by your obedience. Why and how is that possible? It's all because you have been born of God and have overcome the world! You aren't going down the broad path of selfishness. Your new birth has enabled you to swim against the currents of this world and love God and your fellow man. (Ephesians 6:16)

Our faith is the victory! (1Corinthians 15:57) Faith here is a noun. It is our belief based on the word of God. It is knowing Jesus as our Savior and Lord. Acceptance of our faith, the faith of our fathers, has put us in an elite league, the league of overcomers. It's like joining the Fantastic Four only better, for you've teamed up with the fantastic Three.

In John 16:33, Jesus' parting words to His disciples were for them to have faith because He had overcome the world. Now His life in us helps us overcome daily. The letters from Jesus to the churches in Asia give numerous promises to those who overcome, that is those who don't succumb to the temptations that the world was pressing in on the churches. (Revelation 2:7; 11; 17; 26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21) Times have changed but the temptations are similar and the promises of God are the same. Jesus overcame and He will be the Overcomer in us if we will avail ourselves of His power.

The average person is swept away by the world, overcome with debt because they could not control their lust for things, in chains of unforgiveness, fearful of what tomorrow will bring, doubting God, and focused only on the next temporal pleasure. That is what it looks like to be overcome by the world. The one born of God will live a life of freedom from the enslavement of sin. They overcome the world instead of the world overcoming them. Their heart is set on what is truly of value, what is truly lasting. ⁵ *Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*

Overcomes is in the present tense for the battle is still raging. The waves of this world are still crashing against us; temptation, persecution, and false ideologies pound away, but we stand on our unmovable rock, Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 6:10) He already overcame (past tense) and He will see us through if we remain dependent on Him. Go try to stand against those waves on your own and you will be swept away by the first one. (1Peter 5:8) We are presently overcoming, for on Christ Jesus, we will not be moved!! (Psalm 16:8)

This series of interconnected realities of our new life in Jesus all began when we accepted that Jesus of Nazareth, the human being, is the Son of God. But why are we to believe that? Do we just take it by faith? What if John and the other Apostles got the message wrong? How would we know it's not just pie in the sky? And how do we know that Cerinthus wasn't right, that the Christ entered Jesus' body and left before the crucifixion? John answers, ⁶ *This is the one who came by water and*

Commented [notes16]: Ephesians 6:16 (ESV)
16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

Commented [notes17]: 1 Corinthians 15:57 (ESV)
57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Commented [notes18]: John 16:33 (ESV)
33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Commented [notes19]: Revelation 2:7 (NIV)
7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Commented [notes20]: Revelation 2:11 (NIV)
11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Commented [notes21]: Revelation 2:17 (NIV)
17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

Commented [notes22]: Revelation 2:26 (NIV)
26 To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations--

Commented [notes23]: Revelation 3:5 (NIV)
5 He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.

Commented [notes24]: Revelation 3:12 (NIV)
12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming ... [1]

Commented [notes25]: Revelation 3:21 (NIV)
21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Commented [notes26]: Ephesians 6:10 (ESV)
10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

Commented [notes27]: 1 Peter 5:8 (ESV)
8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Commented [notes28]: Psalms 16:8 (ESV)
8 I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

blood--Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

The phrase "the one who came by water and blood" must have been commonly used at the time, for it is not explained and is somewhat enigmatic to us. Numerous interpretations have been offered but they must fit three criteria. According to the text, it must be a witness of why we should believe; it must be the means by which Jesus came (past tense); and it must be God's testimony (verse 9). The best fit seems to be that John is referring to the baptism and the death of Jesus. It was at the baptism that Jesus was commissioned by God to begin His ministry and affirmed to be the Son of God by the voice that came from heaven. (Matthew 13:17) John the Beloved was there. He heard it with his own ears. Even Cerinthus followers believed this.

What they didn't believe was the testimony of blood. Jesus Christ poured out His blood in our place to pay for our sins. God testified to this being an acceptable sacrifice by raising Jesus from the dead. (Acts 17:31) Jesus' words on the cross testified to the fact that He is the Christ, for no man ever spoke as He did during such a torturous death. Even the skeptical centurion was converted by seeing how Jesus laid down His life. (Matthew 27:54) The mission that started at the baptism ended in the pouring out of Jesus' blood, which completed the will of God. (Isaiah 53:12)

Though no one can be found today that still believes in the teaching of Cerinthus, the foundation of his heresy is the foundation of many heresies today, heresies that deny that Jesus' death was the atonement for our sins. John is telling us we should believe and be born of God and overcome the world because of the witness of the baptism and the death of Jesus.

⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. The testimony of the water and the blood are objective facts of history. John observed them. He couldn't deny what He saw. The testimony of the Spirit, however, is subjective. He convinces our hearts that Jesus is who He claimed to be and that He paid this price for us. The three all say the same. Jesus came in the flesh, sent from heaven as God's only Son, to save us from our sin.

I should mention that the KJV has an addition on verse 7 describing the Trinity. This is only found in 15th and 16th century manuscripts. The earliest record is the fifth century in a writing of one of the church fathers. None of the earliest manuscripts contain the passage, though there are many other proof texts for the Trinity. (John 10:30; 14:17-18,23; 2Peter 1:1)

⁹ We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. Men give testimony to things

Commented [notes29]: Matthew 3:17 (NIV)
17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Commented [notes30]: Acts 17:31 (NIV)
31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

Commented [notes31]: Matthew 27:54 (NIV)
54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

Commented [notes32]: Isaiah 53:12 (NIV)
12 Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Commented [notes33]: John 10:30 (ESV)
30 I and the Father are one."

Commented [notes34]: John 14:17-18 (ESV)
17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.
18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

Commented [notes35]: John 14:23 (ESV)
23 Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Commented [notes36]: 2 Peter 1:1 (ESV)
1 Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

they witness and we accept what they saw as actual occurrences. (Deuteronomy 19:15) John asks why we wouldn't then accept the testimony of the One who cannot lie, God? (Numbers 23:19) As God spoke at the baptism and verified Jesus' sacrificial death with resurrection, this would fit with the interpretation of the water and blood representing the baptism the crucifixion. (See John 5:31-40) Is that enough to convince you? What more do you need? John suffered, was imprisoned, exiled, and boiled in oil for holding to this story. Do you have some reason to believe he wasn't telling the truth? No? Then what will you do about it?

10 *Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.* If you believe these fundamental truths of the baptism and death of Jesus, then you will have the testimony of the Spirit in your heart. You believe God. Deny these and you are calling God a liar. John can say this because he was there and observed these things firsthand. He doesn't question if they happened or not. He asks us to believe not only his testimony but that of all the Apostles. However, John is the one disciple that was there at both the baptism and crucifixion. (John 1:37; 19:26-27) They had a powerful impact on what he knew to be the truth of Jesus as the Christ.

11 *And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* Here is God's testimony. This is the testimony of the Spirit. Eternal life is a gift of God that comes through the sacrificial death of Jesus. Enter into Jesus and you enter into life. Christ is life. (John 17:3) If you have Christ you have life. If you do not have Him, if you are not in Him, if you refuse to believe the testimony of God, you do not have life. (John 3:36)

12 *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.* Not too popular an expression today, but truth nevertheless. It's the truth, or John is a liar and Jesus was a bad judge of character for picking him to relay His message, or God is a liar. What do you really think? John wants us to get down to the very heat of the battle. Do you have the Son? Do you have life? Will you believe John's testimony and God's testimony?

Why is John trying so hard to convince those believers in Asia? He was an old man with nothing to gain. He just wanted to encourage them to be overcomers instead of being overcome by the world. That is our desire as well. We don't care if you donate to the church or not. We aren't proclaiming this message to gain members or we'd change the message. We just want everyone to know the truth of Jesus and the life that is found in Him. We want you to be an overcomer through Jesus so that you aren't overcome by the world. He came to give you Life that will transform you. Will you receive Him?

Commented [notes37]: Deuteronomy 19:15 (NIV)
15 One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

Commented [notes38]: Numbers 23:19 (NIV)
19 God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

Commented [notes39]: John 5:31-40 (NIV)
31 "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid.
32 There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid.
33 "You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth.
34 Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved.
35 John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.
36 "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.
37 And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form,
38 nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.
39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me,
40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

Commented [notes40]: John 1:37 (NIV)
37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

Commented [notes41]: John 19:26-27 (NIV)
26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son,"
27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Commented [notes42]: John 17:3 (NIV)
3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

Commented [notes43]: John 3:36 (NIV)
36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

Revelation 3:12 (NIV)

12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.