



"Be kind, for every person you meet is fighting a great battle."
—John Watson

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The Three Witnesses of Christ (Part Three)

The Trinitarian controversy surrounding [1 John 5:7-8](#) overshadows the record of who [Jesus Christ](#) was and what He did. It also hides key characteristics of God's called children and what they should be doing as a result of what [God](#) has done for them. John's words, more than just correctly identifying Christ, tell us what the result of such knowledge should be.

God's children will have repented and been baptized. Even though the baptismal ceremony only needs to happen once, [repentance](#) will be an ongoing practice. They will be perpetually aware of how short they fall because they are fixated on God's perfection as their goal. As they see themselves falling short, they will be moved to repent.

His children also will have accepted the shed blood of Christ. With that acceptance, they will also possess a sober recognition of their all-encompassing obligation, which will motivate them to live worthy of the priceless gift that God has given to them—lives that will be full of good works ([Ephesians 2:10](#)). Using the Holy Spirit, God's children will testify of Him by continually growing in His image and taking on His character.

They will be marked by how they [love](#) Him and their fellow man. The conduct of their lives will point to their motivations, priorities, and what they esteem highly. If they esteem God highly, and if their recognition of their obligation is unclouded, they will be doing everything possible to keep His laws, further identifying them as God's children as they grow to resemble the Lawgiver.

The context of I John 5 fills in the picture still more. When we believe that Jesus is the Messiah ([I John 5:1](#)), God counts us as sons and daughters, even as Jesus is the Son of God ([Hebrews 1:5](#); see [Psalm 2:7](#)). Yet, on our own we cannot arrive at this belief in Christ; God must supply it ([Matthew 16:13-17](#); [John 6:44](#); [Ephesians 2:8](#))! We may intellectually agree that He fulfilled numerous prophecies and was unjustly crucified after living a sinless life, but the belief is not real or full unless we are motivated to *act* on these facts ([James 2:14-26](#)) by repenting, being baptized, receiving the Holy Spirit, and living life according to God's instructions ([Matthew 4:4](#)).

If we love the Father who calls us, it will be manifest because we will also love the brethren, those who are likewise His children ([I John 5:1](#)). John then defines how we love the brethren (by loving God and keeping His commandments) and how we love God (not only by keeping His commandments, but also by being of the same mind with Him so His commandments are not grievous or burdensome [[I John 5:2-3](#); [Amos 3:3](#)]). This same apostle also records that the saints—those whom [Satan](#) persecutes—are those who keep the commandments of God and have the [faith](#) and testimony of Christ ([Revelation 12:17](#); [14:12](#)).

[I John 5:4-5](#) adds another element: "For whatever is born of God overcomes [the world](#). And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" These verses refer to verse 1 by re-emphasizing that spiritual regeneration takes place through the belief that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God.

This belief—this faith—motivates and empowers us to overcome the world, even as Christ overcame the world ([John 16:33](#)). This overcoming refers, not to defeating the nations of the earth, but to prevailing over the world *in*

oneself—conquering the lusts of the flesh and of the eyes and the pride of life that originate in this system opposed to God ([I John 2:15-17](#)).

Overcoming implies *growth against a standard and a process* of development, improvement, and refinement toward a specific goal.

What is the end of this process? "[T]ill we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a *perfect* [complete] man, to the *measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ* " ([Ephesians 4:13](#); emphasis ours). Our progress toward Christ's character image plays a large part in whether we will "inherit all things" ([Revelation 21:7](#)). This does not mean that God will not accept us unless we are perfectly sinless, for as long as we are in this mortal, corruptible body, we will [sin](#). However, God requires His children to be striving to change—overcoming—according to His standard ([Revelation 2:7](#), 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). John continues:

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. ([I John 5:9-10](#))

We "receive" the witnesses of men in the everyday course of life. Unless we have some reason to be suspicious of others' words, we accept what they have to say and allow it to affect us to the point that we act on it. The witness of God—His every word, action, and great work of His hands—is a testimony vastly superior to anything originating in humanity. His testimony of His firstborn Son contains these three witnesses and is perfectly reliable: God can never deceive or be deceived, cannot bear a false witness, does not operate from incomplete information or rumors, and never twists events to His benefit. His witness is of the very highest caliber.

The person who truly believes Jesus is the Son of God will have the witness of the water, the blood, and the Spirit in himself ([I John 5:10](#))! He will know it is true, and that knowledge, combined with such a depth of conviction, will motivate him to act on it. It will spur him to be washed clean of his sin and accept the redemptive blood of the Messiah to commence spiritual life and fellowship with the perfect Father.

Any belief that does not cause a corresponding motivation to act is not true belief. It is like telling God, "Well, it sounds good, but it is not convincing enough to cause me to do anything about it." As John writes, the person who does not believe God this way—and true belief always has work associated with it—has made God a liar. If we believe God's testimony about His Son, our response will be to strive to align our lives with everything God requires and desires of us.

When [1 John 5:7-8](#) is explained truthfully, it clearly does not support the false doctrine of the [Trinity](#). More than that, it reveals that those whom God calls will follow in the footsteps of Christ, who, as our Forerunner, has gone before us and made it possible for us to follow Him.

But follow Him to what? Scripture does not reveal a divine being with three co-equal parts, like someone with a split-personality disorder with whom it is impossible to have a relationship. The Bible reveals a Father and His Firstborn Son who are *distinct* and *unequal*, along with elect children who are preparing to enter fully into the Family of God. In this, we are following Christ, but this process will not be complete until the [first resurrection](#). The water, the blood, and the spirit give an unquestionable record of a process of growth and development into the God Family—a Family that directly contradicts the concept of a Trinity.

- David C. Grabbe

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[Ecclesiastes and the Feast of Tabernacles \(Part 1\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Love for this world will inevitably bring disillusionment. Realizing that the world is passing away, our priorities should be on fearing God and keeping his commandments. The temporary booths (short lived and quickly deteriorating) at the Feast depicts our temporary and impermanent, often unpleasant and disappointing earthly pilgrimage, contrasted with the

permanence of Christ's rule and our future eternal life. Without living for God's purpose for us, this life is absolutely meaningless.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[God's Way of Give at the Feast of Tabernacles](#)

by Staff

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