

<sup>5:1</sup> Everyone  
    who believes  
        that Jesus is the Christ  
has been born of God<sup>1</sup>,  
and everyone  
    who loves the Father<sup>2</sup>  
loves  
    whoever has been born of Him.  
<sup>2</sup> By this we know  
    that we love the children of God,  
    when we love God<sup>3</sup>  
    and obey His commandments.  
<sup>3</sup> For this is the love of God,  
    that we keep His commandments.<sup>4</sup>  
And His commandments are not burdensome.<sup>5</sup>  
<sup>4</sup> For everyone  
    who has been born of God  
overcomes the world.  
And this is the victory that has overcome the world—  
    our faith.<sup>6</sup>  
<sup>5</sup> Who is it that overcomes the world  
    except the one who believes  
        that Jesus is the Son of God?

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<sup>1</sup> Although this is a fine point, the tense of the verb “has been born” is important. Belief is not the cause of being born of God, but rather the consequence. Belief is not from man, but from God (Eph. 2:8-9). Thus from John’s logic, we can know that if we have faith in God, if we believe in Jesus, we are born of God! There is no reason to doubt.

<sup>2</sup> Though John doesn’t draw out this point, he takes it as mere fact that we who are born of God will love God. The part that he must push though is that loving God must also entail loving God’s children. This is one of many reasons why being a Christian is not a solitary activity. To be a Christian means that you will be drawn into community, not only in relationship with God, but also with other Christians. Another way I’ve heard this expressed is to imagine someone wanting to spend time with you, but then saying to you, “Well I like you, but I don’t really like your spouse.” This is what it’s like when someone says they like God, but they don’t want anything to do with the Church, which is the Bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7).

<sup>3</sup> Here John reverses things a bit. In the previous sentence he said that everyone who loves the Father loves the children of God, but now he says the opposite, everyone who loves the children of God also love God. The reason this is important is so that our faith is never simplified down to “mere religion” (speaking only as a spiritual plane, but having no practical effects), nor can our faith be “mere morality or ethics” (the way we act in this world). John would not have people who love their neighbors and say, “Ah ha, I have done all that is necessary.” Without love for God, and what it entails, the keeping of his commandments, that love shown to neighbors is incomplete. Love for God is BOTH love for neighbor AND keeping God’s commandments.

<sup>4</sup> This is exactly what Jesus told His disciples (John 14:15, 21).

<sup>5</sup> Compare Matthew 23:4 and Matt. 11:30. Why might non-Christians find God’s commands burdensome, while Christians would not?

<sup>6</sup> It is not we as Christians who have overcome the world, but rather our faith overcomes the world. What kind of faith? Faith that looks to Jesus as the Son of God. Why this faith? Because only Jesus has overcome this world and its powers (John 16:33) and only those who are connected to Him by faith can share in that victory.