

Second Sunday of Easter

April 8, 2018

1 John 5:1-6

The Direct Correlation between Christ's Victory and Ours.

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Fellow-Redeemed,

So, what does that prove? You may get asked that question when you tell someone the fact you believe and confess weekly in the creed, “on the third day he rose again.” It proves Jesus is God who paid for our sins, and our bodies will rise from death. It proves Jesus' victory has overcome the world. You, too, have overcome the world by making Jesus' victory your own through faith. Such is our new birth.

It is no burden for newborns to love the mother and father who hold them in their arms. It is no burden to love the brothers and sisters who kiss and hug and snuggle them.

Born by the Spirit, we daily translate Christ's resurrection into love. Our victorious life means it is no burden to love God and carry out his commandments. *“Everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.”* It is no burden to love one another. Those simply are the ways we express the justifying faith in our hearts.

John writes about **The Direct Correlation between Christ's Victory and Ours.** The Father's love has made us members of his family. We children overcome the world each day. We build our justifying faith on two strong pillars. Those pillars are Christ's baptism and Christ's crucifixion, the water and the blood. Jesus placed himself under the baptism meant for sinners as he entered the work of his public ministry. At his death Jesus completed the work of satisfaction for our sins and their guilt. John wrote, “This is the one who came by water and blood-Jesus Christ. He did not come by water alone but by the water and by the blood.”

These are the saving truths about Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit continues to reveal in the gospel. These truths overcome the false testimony the world speaks against Jesus. These truths created and sustain our faith in Christ. They are the power that overcomes the world's slander against Christ and against us. “The Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.” The apostle whom Jesus loved asks and answers his own question, “Who is the one who overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

We all must face Satan's lies and schemes that come through others around us, and especially from our own sinful flesh. Living the life of justifying faith in love toward God and one another is not a burden but it sure is a fight. But it is a fight carried out not with uncertainty about the outcome. The outcome already has been determined by Jesus' empty tomb. Jesus won the victory. God has given us Jesus' victory.

We fight the good fight of faith in the ceaseless conquest to overcome sin and evil in our lives. Our own power means certain defeat. We fight in the power of Christ's resurrection triumph. Our faith is not bumper sticker theology, “Honk if you love Jesus.” Living the faith is not pious talk about having to do our duty to love God and love one another in spite of ourselves.

Christ's victory that has overcome the world is our power to overcome the world. Our faith takes great delight in doing God's will. That will is love.

“This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands.”

Love feels no load. Faith in God is strength in God. Our victory in Christ has overcome the world with its power and its pleasures and its purposes. The strength of our victorious faith manifests itself in our daily striving for godliness to God's glory. Obeying God's commands is not only easy and light but a pleasure.

What a horrific lie of Satan that being a child of God means that having to obey the Ten Commandments is like carrying a ton of rocks up a mountain side in a backpack.

The psalm writer describes our relationship with obedience to God's will this way in Psalm 119:13-16, "Praise be to you, O Lord; teach me your decrees. With my lips I recount all the laws that come from your mouth. I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees. I will not neglect your word."

Our victorious faith has overcome the world. In Christ's victory we say no to sin and yes to righteousness. We deplore the evil we commit and embrace God's forgiving love compels us to a living love. We are alert to Satan's trap that my justifying faith in Christ can be my excuse for continued sinning.

I cannot appreciate God's love for me then proceed to love a life clearly in contradiction with God's will and Word. God's love is not license to sin but the power not to sin and the assurance of forgiveness when I do sin. God's love for me is the reason I seek justice for my brothers and sisters in Christ. I want to treat them justly and encourage others to do the same. Justice is, after all, what love looks like in public.

Jesus defined obedience: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. And, love your neighbor as yourself."

Paul uses the strongest language to express the principle by which we live. We are born of God. God has called us and made us his children. In this new birth, the wonderful power of love exists for our Father and for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Our brother's has gained our victory over the entire kingdom of sin and evil. His resurrection bodily from the tomb is proof of that.

Love is the fruit of faith. Luther wrote in his commentary to the Galatians, "After I have apprehended Christ by faith, have died to the law, have been justified from sin and have been freed through Christ from death, the devil, and hell, I do good works. I love God. I thank him, I practice love toward my neighbor."

John wrote his gospel so we would believe Jesus is the Christ. In the three ecumenical creeds we confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. God is our Father in heaven and we are members in God's family by the work of the Holy Spirit. There is direct correlation between Christ's victory and ours. Keeping God's commandments is our great delight. Amen. <SDG>