LIFE IN THE SON

1 John 5:6-12

Key Verse: 5:11-12

“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life, he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

In the last lesson, we thought of overcoming the world. In the flow of the passage, overcoming the world is certainly related to loving God and loving the children of God out of obedience to God’s command. To overcome the world and to love God and his people are to go together. The reason why we should overcome the world, not loving the world, is that in the world there is no love for God and so no true love for people. This is because the world does not know the love of God but is rather hostile to God, even not recognizing God’s existence. John’s encouragement is that those who are born of God can overcome the world with faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who died for our sins was raised to life, thereby conquering sin, death, and Satan, and gave us the hope of the kingdom of God beyond this world. As we overcome the spirit of the world, we can truly love God and love one another in obedience to his command.

Until now, John dealt with God’s love and his divine command of loving one another out of love for God and obedience to his command, overcoming the world. God wants us to live such a Christian life. As life is important, so is doctrine. In today’s passage, 5:6-12, John brings the doctrine of Incarnation, the doctrine of the person of Christ. If doctrine which is the foundation of our faith is not sound, the life cannot be sound, and the house of life cannot be built firmly. Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:16, “Watch your life and doctrine closely.” In dealing with the doctrine concerning the person of Christ, John describes the testimony of Jesus Christ, the person, the reason to accept the testimony and the consequences of accepting the testimony. Let’s study this passage with the title, “Life in the Son.”

**First, water, blood and the Spirit (6-8).** Verse 6 says, “This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but water and blood...” Firstly, the word “came” draws our attention. We have seen in this epistle that John used the words, “he appeared” (1:2; 3:5, 8) “has come” (4:2; 5:6, 20), or “God sent” (4:4:9, 10, 14) in regard to Jesus in this world. All these expressions show that he came from another world, his pre-existence before the creation of the world.

And he came by water and blood, not by the water only, but by water and blood. Here, water refers to the baptism of Jesus, and blood to his death on the cross. In the gospel story, John the Baptist preached the message of repentance and people were baptized by him, repenting of their sins. Certainly, baptism was for sinners. So when Jesus came to be baptized by John, John was surprised and tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” At this Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented (Mt 3:14-15). The fact that Jesus was baptised by John shows that Jesus identified himself with sinners to fulfill God’s purpose of saving sinners. His baptism, in a sense, is the beginning of his demonstration as the Anointed of God, the Messiah.

The Lord Jesus Christ, then, did not merely identify himself with sinners—he went further. He dealt with it not only in water, but also in the blood. His death was an absolute essential in addition to the baptism. He died on the cross for our sins, shedding his blood. It is for the forgiveness of our sins, for without the shedding blood there is no forgiveness as written in Hebrews 9:22. Blood stands for life. His very life-blood appeased God’s wrath fully satisfying God’s righteousness. In other words, Jesus is the atoning sacrifice, propitiation for our sins (2:2; 4:10), as John wrote repeatedly and we thought of again and again. The doctrine of the atoning sacrifice is the foundation of our Christian faith. The reason he came in the flesh was that he might make atonement for the sins of the people according to Hebrews 2:17. It is also written in Romans 3:25, 26 “God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood…to demonstrate his righteousness…”

At the Last Supper, in the very night before his crucifixion, Jesus said to his disciples, “This my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Mt 26:28). And Ephesians 1:7 says, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins…” The author of Hebrews said in 9:12, “He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption” and 10:19, 22 “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body…let us draw near to God...” Apostle John said in 1:7. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” In Revelation we read in 1:5b “to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood” and in 5:9 “…and with your blood you purchased men for God, from every tribe and language and people and nation…”, in 7:14, “they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb”, and 12:11, “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony;” How precious his blood is!

We thank and praise God for the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ.” At the time of John, heresy from a false teacher, Cerinthus, taught that when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan river, the Spirit of Christ came upon him and left him at the time of Jesus’ death. So the death was just the death of human Jesus. But John stressed that he did not come by water only, but water and blood—Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is God-Man, God Incarnate. He is one person with two natures. He came, was baptized, and died on the cross. This is the doctrine of God the Incarnate.

And verse 6b says, “And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.” Jesus’ whole life was led by the Spirit. After his baptism, he, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil (Lk 4:1; Mt 4:1). Luke 10:21 says, “At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.” Apostle Peter said in Acts 10:38, “how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power….” According to Romans 1:4 Jesus through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.” And Jesus said in John 15:26, “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who goes out form the Father, he will testify about me” and 16:13-14, “When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth…He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.” John’s emphasis is that the Holy Spirit is bearing final testimony to the fact that Jesus is the Christ.

Then in verses 7 and 8, it says, “For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.” In court, that witnesses agree is very important, at least two or three. Deuteronomy 19:15 says, “One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offence he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” 1 Timothy 5:19 says, “Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.”

The description, “There are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the tree are in agreement”, shows a perfect powerful testimony concerning Jesus Christ by the Spirit, the water and the blood. The testimony is that Jesus, the Son of God, is the Christ of God.

**Second, God’s testimony (9-10).** Verse 9 says, “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.” When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended on him and a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Mt 3:17). So we can say that Jesus’ water baptism is actually God’s testimony concerning Jesus. Then how about the blood? This is also God’s testimony. It was God’s plan to send his Son to die on the cross and so be an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 4:11). This plan was revealed even from the very moment of man’s sin to send the Saviour from the offspring of a woman, who would crush Satan’s head yet being wounded on his heel, which implies his death and resurrection (Ge 3:15). We also know that when Abraham was about to sacrifice his son Isaac on the mount Moriah as a burnt offering in obedience to God’s command, God stopped him and let him offer a ram which was caught by its horns in a thicket there. This was also an implication that God would sacrifice his own Son 2000 years later at the very place of mount Moriah in Jerusalem, where Solomon’s temple was built (2 Ch 3:1). All the sacrifice system points to the sacrifice of the Son of God on the cross as the reality is found in Christ (Col 2:17; Heb 10:1), otherwise all the numerous animal sacrifices would be pointless and meaningless. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, a centurion said, “Surely this man was the Son of God.” This confession of the centurion was also an implication that it was the testimony of God, who had enough power to protect his Son from such a death, yet silently bore such suffering of his Son. The testimony of the Spirit is also God’s testimony as the Spirit is one of the three persons in the triune God.

In fact, on top of the three that testify, God’s testimony is numerous throughout the whole Scriptures, as Jesus said that the whole Scripture is concerning himself. The holy Bible consists of the Old Testament and the New Testament, which are God’s testimony.

God’s testimony is certainly greater than man’s testimony. One example of man’s testimony is that of John the Baptist to Jesus. Jesus said to the Jews in John 5:33-35, “You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth…John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.” Jesus said this not to depend on man’s testimony but for the sake of their salvation (5:34). And Jesus continued, “I have testimony weightier than that of John.” They are the very work of Jesus and the Father himself. (5:36-37). And Jesus said in John 8:18, “I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.”

Then here verse 10 says, “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 liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.” Here are two kinds of responses toward God’s testimony: accept or reject. “Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart.” Here is the internal testimony of believers in Jesus Christ the Son of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession (Eph 1:14). Their inner conviction is that Jesus is the unique one who died for our sins and rose again from the dead. He is the Christ, the Son of God. He is our Saviour and the Saviour of the world.

“Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.” Here we see that not believing God’s testimony is a fundamental, grievous sin that makes God out to be a liar. It can be equated to the sin of blaspheming. Jesus said to Nicodemus who was unbelieving at that time in John 3:11-12, “I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?” Jesus expressed his pained heart when his testimony was rejected. When people do not believe your testimony, even though you speak what is really true as witnesses, how disappointing and frustrating it will be to you! God’s testimony must be accepted.

In today’s passage 5:6-12, the word “testifies” or “testimony” (in KJV “witness) is written 8 times. It has the connotation of “martyr.” God wants us to be the carriers of his testimony, that is, to become witnesses of Jesus. This is the reason Jesus said in Acts 1:8 says, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses.” What a great life it is to live as a true, faithful and powerful witness of Jesus.

**Third, life in the Son (11-12).** Now verse 11 says, “And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” Because of sin, man lost eternal life in broken relationship with God. Then in his great mercy he has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. The way he has given us eternal life is through his Son’s death and resurrection as we thought of in the first part. The Son had to be made the atoning sacrifice. So obviously the life is in his Son. Apart from the Son, there is no life that is eternal. We need this clarity in our time of pluralism and multi-religion. This is the reason Jesus said in John 14:6, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” 1 John 2:23 is also in accordance with this: “No one who denies the Son has the Father, whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” The Son and the Father go together. It is to deny both or acknowledge both, the Son and the Father. They are inseparable. Life is entirely, exclusively, solely in the Son of God.

Then verse 12 says, “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” Truly one’s attitude toward the Son is of supreme importance in life. John 3:36 says the same truth this way: “Whoever believers in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

Again in verses 11 and 12, “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in the Son. He who has the Son has life.” What is eternal life? Of course, it is living forever with God in the glorious kingdom of God. Yet, the eternal life starts here and now. Jesus said in his high priestly prayer in John 17:3, “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” And also the eternal life, this life, includes all we need for true living in this world, forgiveness of sin, restoration, love, joy, peace, truth, victory, etc., while lifelessness refers to all the elements of death, sorrow, fatalism, bitterness, defeatism, deception, etc. Jesus said in John 6:35, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” Jesus said this to those who experienced the miracle of Jesus’ feeding the five thousand with five loaves and two fish who ate the food and had their fill. Their stomach was satisfied with the physical bread and they wanted to have such satisfaction continually. But Jesus knew that they would not have true satisfaction in their souls, rather they would become hungrier and thirstier. Jesus wanted them to have the Bread of Life so that they would never go hungry and never be thirsty.

Jesus also said, “I am the resurrection and the life…” (Jn 11:25). He said this to two sisters, Martha and Mary, who believed in Jesus but were unbelieving at the moment of their brother Lazarus’ death, although Jesus was there to raise the dead. Jesus wept because of their unbelief that resulted in their suffering under the power of death and Satan, despite Jesus’ presence there. In his broken heart and spiritual anger, Jesus said to them, “Take away the stone.” Now the sisters were in a situation between the two, Jesus’ command to take away the stone and their thought of what others think of them. The people who were there came to comfort them. But if the stone was removed and terrible odor came out and nothing happened, that would be the appropriate etiquette of the people who came to console them at the loss of their brother. Their dead brother was in the grave four days and the stone was very heavy to them. Despite all these, the sisters decided to obey Jesus’ command and took way the stone from the entrance of the tomb. Then Jesus said, “Lazarus, Come out!” The dead man indeed came out. Jesus proved that he is the resurrection and the life. This event shows that our real enemy is our unbelief which includes considering people around us and our own difficult situation more than Jesus who is present and right here to help us. We should fight against this enemy in us truly as a matter of life or death so that Jesus’ life may work in us in any life situation. And we realize a spiritual principle that it is our job to remove the stone, while it is the work of Jesus to raise the dead. We should also deep recognize that our adverse life situation is an wonderful opportunity to experience the life in Jesus. And Jesus said in John 10:10, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

As we studied, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. What a blessing it is to have such fellowship. May we enjoy fellowship all the more until we have life to the full! It is to rely on the blood of the Son in repentance of our sins at each time and living by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal 2:20). We are also to know that the purpose of being witness of Jesus to others is that they may also have life in the Son by believing that he came by water and blood and the Spirit’s testifying.