

# 1 John 5

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Date: 30 November 2025

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[ 0 : 00 ] God, we are so grateful that in the fullness of time, you in your great love, you sent your son to be born of a virgin, to take on flesh and live a perfect life.

God, and to show the world, even to this day, who God truly is.

Father, thank you for all that you have done to bring us back to you. For we were straying like sheep, the Apostle Peter writes, but now we have returned to the shepherd of our souls.

All because you came looking for us, Lord, in real space, in real time, in real history, in real flesh. You came for your sheep.

Praise your holy name for your faithfulness. We love you, Lord. Bless our time in your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You can be seated.

[ 1 : 19 ] Would you open your Bibles to 1 John chapter 5? This will be our final sermon in this wonderful little letter that John wrote to his beloved little children, most likely in the city of Ephesus.

This last sermon fits the text because the text is more or less a summary of all that John has taught before, and I thought we did an okay job of covering most of the major themes.

There are a couple things that we'll pick up today that I don't think we've really thoroughly handled yet in this series that appear also in this summary. I'm not sure we fully discussed faith and belief at a level fitting the way that John handles these concepts.

So we're going to cover that today. I'm also not sure that we've really thoroughly discussed the reality of spiritual warfare and the reality of the fight that we have, and we're going to discuss that today as well.

The word victory or conflict and so forth appear often in John's teachings and his writings. One of the things that I, to this day, I've walked with God for a lot of years now, and I still have these very annoying blind spots, these very annoying tendencies.

[ 2 : 50 ] And one of those tendencies is to forget that I have an enemy who's trying to hurt me, to forget that I'm actually in a fight.

And I have a tendency, even as a pastor, to forget that the church lives on a spiritual battleground. With all the weddings and the babies and the potlucks and the Bible studies, amid all of the warm fellowship and like seemingly normal Sundays, I just sometimes forget.

I don't know about you, I forget that the church is in a spiritual war and will be in a spiritual war until the Lord's return.

You know, I was in a cab with a Bosnian Muslim the other day, and the war in Bosnia, which I think is like, what, is it 90, 95, maybe something like that?

It was right around the time I was really getting into geopolitical stuff. And so I read a lot about this at the time. And so now I'm in a cab with a guy who's experienced it, and I just asked him, tell me about the war.

[ 4 : 03 ] And so Angela and I, on the way back from the airport for 45 minutes, listened to this Bosnian Muslim man tell his firsthand experiences of the siege of Sarajevo and so on and so forth.

And it was fascinating. It was, I learned so much, but what I really appreciated about that was that I was hearing about the war from a perspective I hadn't heard before.

And I begin to remember just how that often plays out. If you were to ask Putin, why are you at war with Ukraine? And then you were asked Zelensky, why are you at war with Russia?

The answers would be wildly different. I thought about how if you went to the devil and you said, why are you attacking me? I think the devil might look just back at us and say, why are you attacking me?

Reality is, is that there's a sense in which the church is the, not the victim of this fight, but the aggressor of this fight. We're not necessarily the ones in a defensive bunker hoping to make it

through the night.

[ 5 : 08 ] We're part of the kingdom that is called to invade enemy territory. And there is a reasonable sense in which the incarnation should be thought of as an invasion, in which Christ has come and he died and he rose again.

And he started redeeming people who were slaves to this enemy territory. And not only redeeming them, but turning them into soldiers.

That's what a saint is. Soldiers in his kingdom. And so there is a real sense in which not only are we at war, but there's a real sense in which we, because we are aligned with Christ, can be perceived to be the aggressors.

We are the ones who are winning. That's true. Every conversion is a casualty to the cause of the devil. Every disciple made is one further individual taken for Christ away from Satan.

Every step in holiness is just one more territory seized away from the darkness and into the light.

And so one of the things you just need to think about, and I need to think about is, is that the church is a place where warfare happens.

[ 6 : 21 ] And however you want to frame it, as I think there's a way to frame it in both senses, we should not be surprised that the devil punches back. We should remember that we are part of the team who's throwing punches too.

We are in a spiritual war. And the weapon of that war, as John describes it, is primarily faith. Look at 1 John chapter 5 verses 4 through 5.

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. The word overcome there doesn't simply mean endure their efforts.

It means win. It means victory. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith.

What does John attribute our weaponry to? What does he call our weaponry? He says it's faith.

That's a noun there, and that'll be important later. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

[ 7 : 36 ] And I think most broadly, what I have learned from our time in 1 John, is that faith is both a great weapon of warfare in the offensive and defensive sense.

Faith is the main weapon of warfare in the Christian life. And I think if you were to maybe go back and start over in 1 John, I would probably start talking about it this way.

Because we are at war, the devil has responded in an insurgency kind of way with two main strategies.

Since faith is the thing that wins the war, he has taken two main strategies. I think the book of 1 John maps out this way. He has tried to distort the object of our faith, which is Christ.

And he has tried to distort our expectations for the outcome of our faith. Let me say it real simple.

Two of the ways the devil gets faith away from him, away from us in a way that we could use it to win, is he twists the object of our faith.

[ 8 : 48 ] He gives us different versions of Christ that are false. And secondly, he changes our expectation for the outcome of our faith so that we stop expecting faith to do things.

We start reframing faith as a set of beliefs, not a weapon, not a thing that actually changes things. So let's work through the final 16 verses of this little letter.

Now remember John's writing style. He doesn't go in a linear way. He uses this thing called amplification. So we're going to be circling around these themes. But I want you just to read this with me silently as I read it out loud.

And look for these themes. Look for war. Look for the object of our faith is Jesus. The attempt to change the nature of Jesus in our sight. And look for this idea of the outcome.

The thing that faith produces. Verse 4 again. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world. Our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

[ 9 : 59 ] This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ. Not by the water only, but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies because the Spirit is the truth.

For there are three that testify. The Spirit and the water and the blood. And these three agree. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. For this is the testimony of God that he is born concerning his Son.

Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar because he has not believed in the testimony that God has born concerning the Son.

And this is the testimony that God gave us. Eternal life. And this life is in the Son. Whoever has the Son has life. Whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence we have toward him. That if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

[ 11 : 05 ] And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will give him life.

To those who commit sins that do not lead to death, there is a sin that does lead to death. I do not say that you should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin. But there is a sin that does not lead to death. We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning.

But he who has been born of God protects him. And the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are from God. And the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true.

And we are in him who is true. In his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. A lot going on there.

And we're not going to be able to cover every single element of the text selection that we have today. If you'd like to have every single element covered, I can recommend a commentary.

Sermons are not commentaries.

[ 12 : 12 ] So let's go ahead and talk about some of the main ideas in this passage. The first one is the object of our faith. Now, we have talked about this before.

We do know that there's a few other places in 1 John where he is really handling this problem of the enemy's attempt to pervert or counterfeit a version of Christ to get us to believe in some version of Christ that's not a real Christ.

We've talked about this before. John's covered it before. In chapter 2, verses 18 through 23, he talks about many antichrists have come into the world.

Many other Christs. Anti in the ancient world did not mean against so much as it meant alternatives. And so many other Christs have entered into the world.

So 1 John 4, 1 through 3, he brings this up again. Many false prophets have gone out. Every spirit that does not confess Jesus Christ comes. Every spirit that does not confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh is not from God.

[ 13 : 16 ] There's a false Jesus being presented, a kind of Jesus who appeared spiritually but not physically. So one of this devil's great techniques in screwing us up with our faith is to change the object of our faith.

And John's been covering this. He's like, yeah, there's going to be these alternative Christs that appear. So as we were reading through chapter 5, you were like, what is this water and spirit and blood stuff?

Like, what is going on here? This feels super intractable. What is John talking about? Look at that again in verse 6 of chapter 5. This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ.

Not by the water only, but by the water and the blood. And the spirit is the one who testifies because the spirit is the truth. For there are these three, for there are three that testify, the spirit, the water, and the blood.

And these three agree. By the way, sometimes you're going to read something and you're just going to be like, am I dumb or is this hard? And I would tell you, like, a lot of times, as much as it pains me to say, it's not that you're dumb.

[ 14 : 26 ] It's that it's hard. No, I'm kidding. Sometimes you just need to remember, like, some of this is just really hard to understand. And it's actually not you. I would love to tell you it was you, but it's not you.

Sometimes it's it, the book. What's going on here? What is John talking about? Well, there were all of these heresies emerging right away. Now, this is the main point here.

I'm going to explain to you what he's talking about. I do not want you to miss the forest for the trees. Here's the forest. As soon as Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father, false Christs get

introduced onto the scene.

Jesus predicted this in Matthew 24. He says, many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and they will lead many astray. And nearly every apostle in the New Testament is dealing with this problem of counterfeit Christs popping up.

Not accidentally, not coincidentally, strategically. This is what the devil is doing. He is throwing up false versions of Jesus to get us to place our faith in an empty, false Jesus instead of the true one.

[ 15 : 33 ] So this is everywhere. Paul, in 2 Corinthians, he says, what I think is true of every apostle, I am afraid your minds will be led astray if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus.

If someone were to come today, he says to the Corinthians, and proclaim another Jesus, I'm afraid you would buy it. It's interesting, we think of the apostles as people who introduced Jesus to the world.

It's like the apostles are those who introduced Jesus to the world and reintroduced Jesus to the church over and over and over again.

And so this problem of false Christ popping up, Jesus predicted it, it's right there at the very beginning. So I'm going to explain what this text means, but understand the main idea is the devil is going to do this to us.

He's going to give us false versions of Jesus so that we would place our faith in those versions that have no life, that have no power, that have no hope, rather than the one who really is true and who does save and does sanctify.

[ 16 : 38 ] Now, what is John getting at here? Well, one of the very early Christological heresies went like this. You know how when Jesus was baptized, the spirit descended on him like a dove?

I think most of us know that, right? That's what the water reference is here. And then the blood reference is the cross. This is nearly universally agreed upon by commentators.

So the water is his baptism, the blood is the cross. Well, this particular heresy went something like this. And it was an effort to square the circle of how the human mind can't comprehend the hypostatic nature of Jesus, that he is both God and man.

And what do we do when we can't understand theology? We give the devil a door to open up and give us a lame explanation that fits our brains and works within our logical structures.

And it's almost always wrong. If you've ever tried to explain the Trinity to your kids, you've probably committed heresy. We've all done this. Okay. And so, you know, people are really struggling with this idea that Jesus is both fully God and fully man.

[ 17 : 43 ] And so one of the heresies to emerge as a consequence of this difficulty is the one that we're looking at here. And it simply went something like this. When Jesus was just a man, that's the layer, first layer.

When he gets baptized, the spirit of divinity falls on him. And so now he's a man with God's spirit. And then as he is handed over to the cross, God's spirit leaves him and he suffers again the cross as a mere man, no longer indwelt by the divine.

That's the original heresy. Now, again, this really affects how we think about the Bible. Are we to read this passage thinking, well, I ought to keep my eye out for that heresy?

Well, yeah, sure. But a wise Christian would read this passage and say, of course, I want to look out for the particular heresy mentioned in this text.

[ 18 : 43 ] But more broadly, I want you to be aware of the general patterns that emerge by the devil's efforts to distract us from the real Christ. And that is to give us a Christ that makes more sense to us.

That's that's the real trick to give us a Christ who makes more sense of us to us. And so I could ask you, like, let's in fact, let's do it. Let's do an audience poll really quickly. I'll just mention a few possible counterfeit Christs.

There's the real popular one. Jesus was a really excellent teacher, but he wasn't God. There's another one that's like Jesus was God, but he was never man.

He never took on flesh. These are kind of the categories that John's dealing with. And then there's that Jesus really is a super nice guy who would never tell someone no.

And he's just super understanding and kind and friendly. Okay. So of the three, number one, Jesus was just a teacher. Number two, Jesus was God, but not a man.

[ 19 : 47 ] And number three, he's both of those things, but he's super, super, super nice and would never tell anybody no. Which of those three do you think is the primary counterfeit Christ in our

world today?

Okay. Okay. Three. All right. Is that one in our text? No. That's what it means to make application, by the way.

Wise pastoral application. Not looking at this specific heresy, but so much the broader question of what would the devil do to us in this general pattern?

And you've got it exactly right. The new false Christ of today is this super passive and permissive Christ. And there will be a new one as soon as we get figured out.

As soon as we figure out that, there'll be a new one. I bet the new one will be like a kind of like a racist Christ. You know, there'll be a new one. There'll be a meanie Christ next.

[ 20 : 43 ] There'll be a totalitarian Christ. Like, we're just going to have to constantly expect that the goal of the devil is mainly to counterfeit the object of our faith.

Because if we were to place our faith in a false God, we would have indeed a false faith. The pastor's primary job, actually, in preaching is simply to keep presenting Christ to people as he appears in God's word over and over and over again.

Because it is the singular issue that is most under attack. By the way, it's not always theological. Most of the devil's attacks on the nature of God are not theological. They're circumstantial. Let me just get real with you for a second. And I want to frame this the right way.

Angela and I have walked in the trenches of hurting hearts for decades. And one of the worst things that could happen to a person is to experience, as a child, some kind of abuse.

[ 21 : 51 ] You know? Do you know what's going on there? You know what's fundamentally going on there? That's the devil trying to convince that little kid that God isn't as good as the Bible says he is.

It's an attack on theology through circumstance. You know, if that's happened to you, understand what that was.

That was a theological attack, but it wasn't because someone came and said something to you. It's because your circumstances teach you things, too. And if you endured that, the devil's aim is what I'm talking about right now. To distort the object of your faith. And if you've experienced that, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

You went through a period where, and maybe you're still there, where you're not sure God is good. If you ever lost someone, if something completely unfair has happened to you, understand what's going on is what I'm talking about now.

[ 22 : 56 ] It's not simply enough to say, watch out for false teachers, because what fundamentally, guys, if we're honest, teaches us more than anything else? Our circumstances.

That's not appropriate. I'm just saying that's what happens. And so understand, like, one of the devil's fundamental goals to strip you of your faith, because your faith is victory, is to, whether through formal teaching, or relationships, or Christian books, or through circumstances, just get you to believe in a Jesus that doesn't exist.

And to take your eyes off the one who is really real. And that's why I'm such a Jesus snob. And I want you to be a Jesus snob. As soon as someone starts telling you what Jesus is like, be careful. I was thinking, you know, you're going to get a lot more middle-aged man illustrations over the upcoming years, I have a feeling. So, here we go. You know, middle-aged men get ingrown toenails.

That's one of our glories. And, you know, if I had to get an ingrown toenail taken out, it's painful. I would just, like, Google toe doctor, book an appointment, and get the thing taken out.

[ 24 : 16 ] If I had a little skin cancer on my face, honestly, at this point, a scar on my cheek would only add to my gravitas. So, I just would Google scancer.

That's what I call skin cancer, scancer. And I would just Google a scancer doctor, and I'd just get it cut off my face. But what if I needed brain surgery?

I am going to visit brain surgeons and interview them like some of you all look at wedding venues. I am going to be super, super careful.

Because that's a really important part of my body that I'm going to take extra care of. Friends, you just understand that your understanding of who Jesus is is the central aspect of your spiritual identity.

And so, whenever someone or circumstances seek to tell you who Jesus is, you be very, very careful. Because if they get in there and successfully mess with stuff there, your perception of

Jesus, you're going to be in trouble.

[ 25 : 28 ] Okay. So, now we move on from the devil's attempt to mess with the object of our faith to this other issue. And that is something like, the devil would like us to change our expectations of faith.

Or, if you are fond of alliteration, the outcome of our faith. The second strategy is to sort of get us to have a different understanding of the nature of faith itself.

I think you could probably say that in the early church, there were these two fronts of attack. One was Christology. Change people's understanding of who Jesus was.

And the other was something related to change the understanding of what faith is. This was already kind of in the air because the Jews, when Jesus came, were already so deluded, they thought that, you know, because they had the magic Abraham blood, that they were automatically in the kingdom.

There was already this vibe of, I'm in, so I'm in, and that's good enough. And that moved into a very interesting direction right away in the early church.

[ 26 : 41 ] And that was to believe that saving faith was merely holding to a set of ideas. That's kind of like almost immediate in the Christian, in the early church, was this idea that what it means to be a Christian is to believe a set of ideas.

Now, we have seen a lot of this in 1 John. He has really gone out of his way to say, it's way more than that. Probably the most famous place that this is handled, that you might be aware of, is not in 1 John, but in James.

Where James says, point blank, faith without works is dead. Well, you know, if you've been here throughout the 1 John series, that that's exactly what John's been doing.

He's been saying, yeah, it's not enough just to believe some stuff. True belief in that stuff will lead you to do certain things. And just about every single epistle that I can think of, every single apostle has two main tasks.

Reintroduce the church that's struggling to the nature of Christ and remind them that true faith is not mere belief. It's something more than that.

[ 28 : 01 ] Sometimes they take it on head on, like James, faith without works is dead. And sometimes, like Paul would just say, now you realize that if you really believe in Jesus, you can't keep sleeping with your girlfriend. But it's all the same thing.

It's all just, we need to make sure that our understanding of faith doesn't become mere, I believe the right things about God. It's more than that.

Now, one of the ways that John reveals this to us is it requires a little bit of a careful study. One of John's big words in the Gospels and in the epistles that he writes is the root word, pistou, pistos. And it's the word for believe or faith. And it's a noun and a verb. In classical Greek, it's a noun and a verb. It's kind of like love in that way. You know, it could be a noun, it could be a verb.

John loves the word pistou. He loves the word. It's one of his power words, both in this chapter, in chapter five, and also in his Gospels.

[ 29 : 12 ] But I want you to understand that he, statistically speaking, I could say this, he always uses, with one exception, he always uses the verb form.

The one exception is the verse we just read a moment ago in verse four, chapter five, where he uses the noun form. But basically, for John, faith, belief is a thing you do, not a thing you hold. It's not a set of beliefs. It's not a set of doctrines. It's an activity you engage in. 99, literally, this is not just hyperbole, 99% of all John's uses of this term are in its verb form.

Literally, one time out of all the other times is the word used in a noun form. Now, I believe that if you were honest, if I were honest, we would say that that's actually, that reveals a massive reason for the fecklessness and impotency of the church in modern times, is I believe that for the most part, people think of Christianity mostly as a set of beliefs and not an ongoing action.

So we would be inverting the way that John handles it, and we would say that most of the time, 99% of the time, in the Western world, when we talk about Christianity, we talk about a noun, a set of beliefs, a category of doctrines, not a life, not an activity.

[ 30 : 50 ] And I think that if you just were like, well, why are we so watered down these days? Like, well, we have about a trillion different Christs that people all say they believe in, and we have this functional breakdown of what it even means to believe.

We have made believe to be a set of doctrines, and John never intended that to be the case. God never intended for that to be the case. And if you're not aware of this, you'll allow the devil to turn your living and active faith into something that just sits in one corner of your brain that you're using for fire insurance.

that doesn't actually affect you. Literally every time John uses the word believe, it's always what is known in grammar as the present active participle.

It's always an ongoing action. It just doesn't show up that way in our English Bibles. John 3, 16, for God so loved the world, he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Well, what's the way that the modern Western Christian thinks of that? That one day I asked Jesus into my heart, belief happened, and now I'm going to heaven when I die.

[ 32 : 11 ] The word believe there is active and ongoing. Whoever continues to believe will not perish, but have everlasting life.

In verse 36 of John 3, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

It's ongoing. And you can see that, by the way, in that word obey that appears right next to belief. In chapter 5, verse 24, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and ongoingly believes in him who sent me has eternal life.

Chapter 6, verse 35, whoever ongoingly believes in me shall never thirst. In 1 John 5, 5, who is it that overcomes the world except the one who ongoingly believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

A simple way to picture what the word belief actually means versus the way that we use it would be to say, imagine a scenario where you cannot swim, but you are on a boat in the ocean, and someone hands you a life jacket, and you say, I hereby decree faith in the reality of the buoyancy of this life jacket, that it is stronger than my weight, and it will keep me above water.

[ 33 : 44 ] That's what most Christians think Christianity is. That's what most Christians think faith is. The stipulation, the declaration that that life jacket is capable of something, is something.

But what the Bible is actually talking about when it talks about belief and faith is that, no, it's actually true belief would put on the life jacket and jump in the water.

So why is this wild divergency between some who call themselves Christians and others when we all say we believe the same things and you're trying to understand why is so and so, like, where are they spiritually?

And you ask them and they're able to stipulate, yes, of course I believe Jesus is the Son of God, yes, so on and so forth. What's going on? Well, what's going on is that the devil has strategically hijacked this word to make it feel like as long as you sign an agreement on a few creedal statements, you're saved.

And the Bible's just not written that way. It's written to say ongoing, ongoing, a constant sense of belief.

[ 34 : 56 ] Scripture never treats faith as quiet, as private. Faith is always displayed in Scripture as both a weapon of offense and defense.

I was thinking about how some people, not very bright people, but some people have read Ephesians 5 and saw that the shield of faith there means that faith is a defensive weapon because it's able to extinguish the fiery darts of the enemy.

And I would say, well, first of all, in ancient literature, shields were never purely defensive. You used them to charge, to push, to advance, to break enemy lines.

A first century shield was a tool of both offense and defense. It was a tool, actually, of movement. You used it to advance. You didn't just stand in a place and hide behind it.

But more importantly, you just have to understand that when Paul talks about faith as a shield, that's just one way of talking about it. The Bible uses all sorts of metaphors and all sorts of ways of talking about faith, and the shield is just one way.

[ 36 : 05 ] In fact, if we turn to Hebrews, we'll see that faith is really obviously used in an offensive weapon kind of way. Abraham left his homeland by faith.

Moses confronted Pharaoh by faith. The walls of Jericho fell by faith. By faith, believers quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, and put foreign enemies to flight.

Hebrews 11, 34. So now you begin to see what John is saying in 1 John 5, 4. This is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. And you can see now what the devil's doing.

What is the devil doing? He has essentially been locked into two aims since Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father. That's my grandson.

Sorry. He has done essentially two things. All the way through to this day, he has sought to twist the object of our faith to give us a Jesus who is not the true Jesus and thus extinguish our faith by directing it to something that is not true.

[ 37 : 22 ] And his second line of attack is to get us to believe that faith is simply a collection of intellectual beliefs to be assented to rather than what it really is in the Bible and that is ongoing trust.

You can see this. It's funny. In 1 John 1.9, I'm just going to riff for a minute. This is such an interesting thing. In 1 John 1.9, in the Greek, you're reading, you're dancing along in the Greek and you read, God is pistous.

You're like, wait, what? God has faith? And if your understanding of faith is beliefs, then you're like, what does this mean?

God believes? What does God believe? Does God believe in himself? Does God believe in me? Like, all sorts of crazy possibilities emerge. No, the word just means trustworthy.

Pistol in the Bible, faith in the Bible, belief in the Bible, it just means to trust God. And true trust always brings evidence. True trust always brings evidence.

[ 38 : 33 ] So now what I'd like to do to close, and this has been a little luxury, sorry, but it's just a fascinating thing to me to realize that the devil's been doing two things for 2,000 years and that we keep falling for it.

Let's go back through this text and let's look for, I want you to just personally, as I read this, I want you to look for three themes. The existence of a fight, that fight centering around faith and the two issues that we've talked about with faith.

What is my faith, who is my faith in and what do I think faith actually does? So let me just read this kind of slowly and just look for these themes. The existence of the fight, the importance of faith, the enemy's response to that by kind of inserting new objects of faith, new Christs, and also a different expectation of what faith does.

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world and this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is He who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not by the water only, but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testified because the Spirit is the truth.

[ 39 : 58 ] For there are three that testify, the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that He has borne concerning His Son.

Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe, God has made him a liar because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning His Son.

And this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life. Whoever does not have the Son does not have life.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life and this is the confidence that we have toward Him that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

and if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him. If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will give him life to those who commit sins that do not lead to death.

[ 41 : 10 ] There is sin that leads to death. I do not say that one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is a sin that does not lead to death. We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning, but he who was born of God protects him and the evil one does not touch him.

We know that we are of God and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true and we are in Him who is true, in His Son, Jesus Christ.

He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourself from idols. Let's do, let's close out this way. Where, this will be a good community group discussion later this week.

What's the devil doing to you? What's the world, the flesh, and the devil doing to you? Where is he messing with you? Is he jiggering with your view of who God is?

Is he doing that because you're watching really dumb, false theological videos online? Or because you're reading dumb books? Or just listening to bad teachers?

[ 42 : 24 ] Or, is he messing with your understanding of who Jesus is by messing with your circumstances? By getting you to believe that he isn't as good as he says he is?

Or, as holy as he says he is? Because one of the things that could be going on, and I've been here too, is if you keep doing something you know you're not supposed to, eventually you're going to talk yourself into believing that God doesn't actually care.

Especially if he doesn't drop the hammer on you. So if you keep walking in disobedience, well, one of the things you're teaching yourself is a false God who doesn't actually care about your life and about your choices.

So where is he messing with you on the front of the object of your faith? Has he introduced some terrible thing into your life that keeps screaming to you, there's no way this is who God really is.

God is not really all-powerful and all-loving because look, I have evidence, A, of that. Might have been in your past, might be in your present. Where is his support if he's so good?

[ 43 : 27 ] Where is his care? Where was he when such and such happened? Why this? Why that? Could you just join me in understanding that we struggle with this massive blind spot? We forget that we're being messed with constantly.

Could you grow in a little healthy paranoia alongside of me and understand you have an enemy and he's trying to get you sifted like wheat.

So where is the object being messed with in your life? Now, secondly, how has your understanding of faith gotten flipped to where it's more of just a thing, a group of things you believe in than it is a thing you do?

Is it an area of sin in your life? Are you living in a way that is incoherent to the calls that you see in Scripture?

Is it in a passive way? Are you failing to live a life full of zeal where you proactively seek out others to care for? Where in your life is your sense of faith more formal and nounish than progressive, ongoing, and verbish?

[ 44 : 54 ] Well, understand that, yeah, you're a sinner and you have a flesh and, yeah, you're a part of the problem, but I just want you to awaken to the fact that the entire book that we just worked through over weeks was written to this little church who was under attack and not simply by their own sin, but by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

And he was trying to mess with the object of their faith and their expectations about the outcome of their faith. And I believe he does that in every Christian life and in every church.

So let's just take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to show us we do come before you and just ask for your guidance in understanding where these two things are not quite right.

Well, first of all, Lord, give us, right now, Lord, give us the faith, Lord, through your grace, give us the faith to remember we're at war. We have an enemy who's trying to steal, kill, and destroy.

Now, his strategies are very obvious. And that's what we see in this letter. Lord, make them obvious in our lives.

[ 46 : 16 ] Please let us return to the true Christ and live a life of true trust. We love you, Lord. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Sometimes communion is simply to be taken as a seal, a promise that he is faithful, he will surely do it. And he will surely do it.

He is your shepherd, your good shepherd. So if you're a Christian here today following Jesus, if you've placed your faith and are living out that faith in Christ, would you come and take of these elements and we'll partake of them together.

But let's use this time as a reminder that he will never leave us or forsake us and that he will hold us fast. Come now. Thank you.