

BELIEVE IT | LIVE IT
I JOHN 5 - FAITH
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This morning we come to the end of our series on 1 John - a series we have entitled **Believe it, Live it**, looking at Ch 5, summing up this chapter with the title - **FAITH**.

What does faith mean to you? Well obviously we, as Christians, think about Jesus.

What does faith mean to people generally? There are lots of possibilities but the key idea might be simply - positive thinking.

Have you seen those plaques in gift shops which simply say "Believe". They don't tell you what to believe, just believe.

Think of the situation where a friend is driving you to an important appointment and you're late and say, "I'm not sure we're going to make it." And your friend simply says, "Have faith!" "We'll make it." That's all about positive thinking.

There are many people in our society who would claim to have a faith in God but when pressed about this faith would find it very difficult to articulate who their God is and how their faith makes a difference in everyday life.

For those of us who follow Jesus our faith has very specific content.

1 John fills out that content.

It is good to finish our series on the topic of faith because it summarises the whole book. All the topics we've looked at in this series speak about faith – light Ch1, obedience and truth Ch2, purity Ch3 and love Ch 4. They all sit well with faith don't they. The title we've given the whole series is about faith – Believe it, Live It.

Previously I used a **musical analogy** for us to think about 1 John and I want to return to that today. It is like we have been dancing to the world's tune but now Jesus comes along with a much better composition. It is a rich piece of music using all the instruments of the orchestra. There are a number of themes which are interwoven throughout the piece. And it is like different instruments pick up the different themes and each is highlighted at different points in the composition.

Each of these **themes** brings out **another aspect of faith**.

- aspects which explore who God is.
- aspects which explore what it means to live faithfully under this God. But it is all about faith.

I want to look at how the word faith is used in this chapter and the related theme of knowing. John talks about us knowing God. Not just knowing about God but knowing God. This too is about faith.

So I want to look at FAITH under two headings.

Content and Confidence.

For John, faith has some very specific content. We call this doctrine. But John also wants this doctrine, this content, to lead people into a confident knowing of God.

1. CONTENT

The phrase the Apostle uses more than any other in relation to faith, in this chapter, is **Son of God**.

In **v5** the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God , overcomes the world.

v10 the one who believes in the Son of God accepts God's testimony.

v13 the one who believes in the name of the son of God can know that they have eternal life.

v20 the one who believes in the Son of God is given understanding and knows him who is true.

And in the middle section **verses 6 to 12** John talks a lot about God as a Father testifying to his Son. The word testimony appears **eight times**. The central focus is God's testimony about his Son. In v9 John says, *"We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God which he has given about his Son"*.

There are **three others who also testify to Jesus** – vv,7,8 **the Spirit, the water and the blood**.

We know who **the Spirit** is, this is the Holy Spirit who Jesus promised would testify to him and this is especially brought out in John's gospel.

The **water and the blood** are a little more confusing. The most likely explanation is that these terms are referring to Jesus' baptism and crucifixion.

He was baptised in water and at the cross shed his blood. So this is referring to Jesus ministry from start to finish. The water and the blood are powerful symbols of Jesus' saving work.

But more than the Spirit, the water and the blood, it is **God's testimony** that truly counts and he testifies to the fact that Jesus is his Son. John says you can't truly believe in God unless you accept this testimony. Look at v10, *"Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."*

Very blunt? Jesus, the Son of God, is all that matters. Whatever other ideas people have about believing will not save them. The Apostle John says it is only faith in Jesus as the Son of God that is eternal life.

The other title for Jesus in this passage is **Christ**.

v1 it is, *everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ who is born of God*.

v6 Jesus is given the title Christ and here the term is linked with the water and blood. It is God's anointed, the Christ, who is baptised and who sheds his blood on the cross.

v20 it is God's Son, Jesus Christ who is the true God and eternal life.

In three places the title Christ as attributed to Jesus alongside the title Son of God which occurs four times.

The idea of Jesus being the **Son of God** and **Christ** actually overlap in that they both carry the idea of being **a King**.

In the Old Testament God was the nation of Israel's King. Human Kings were appointed to rule on behalf of God and were seen as God's sons on earth. In Psalm 2:6 God says, "I've installed my King on Zion, my holy mountain." And then in v7, *"You are my son today I have become your father."* This was the status given to Kings when they were anointed to rule God's people. All of the Kings failed to a greater or lesser degree to live up to this high calling. Only one King truly fulfilled the calling to be the Son of God and that is Jesus.

When we think of **the term Christ** this is not Jesus' surname. It is a title which means **anointed one**. It has rich connotations of being a King because the Kings were the anointed ones, anointed to rule God's people in justice and peace. Jesus is the anointed one of God who rules with perfect justice and peace.

When John talks about faith it is not just some wishy washy idea about positive thinking. It is about faith in Jesus and it has rich content about who Jesus is.

-He is **Son of God** King of Israel.

-He is **the Christ**, God's anointed King who will deliver his people.

2. CONFIDENCE

In second half of the passage the idea of **faith is knowing**. From v13 to the end **the word 'know'** appears seven times.

In this context it is another way of talking about **faith**. To have faith in God is to know God.

The word **know** brings a **personal dimension to faith**. John wants his followers to have a confident faith where they can say **they know God** and **they know they have eternal life**.

v13, *"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."*

There is much in this epistle that would make us doubt our relationship with God especially when John says that those who sin cannot know God. Yet here at the end of the epistle he wants to reassure them that God is knowable.

Vv 16,17 clarify much of what he has written previously about sin. There is a **sin that leads to death (v16)** and people caught up in this sin cannot know God and will never attain eternal life. What is this sin?

From the passage we could say it is things like –

- Not believing that Jesus is the Son of God v12.
- Not accepting the testimony of the water and the blood ie. believing in his baptism and crucifixion.
- Not accepting the testimony of the Spirit ie a hard heart that keeps resisting the Spirit's promptings in one's heart.

So maybe we could sum this up as a stubborn, determined rejection of God. This is the sin that leads to death.

However there is **sin which does not lead to death**. These are the slip ups and stumbles along the way, as we walk with Christ. These are the imperfections believers struggle with every day. But a soft heart towards God means we will repent and come back. These sins do not lead to death, ie spiritual death.

Using the analogy of the **new music** Jesus has given us - it's about knowing the beauty of the new tune we are to play, but still making mistakes in the way we play it. As my piano teacher used to say to me, it's all about practice, make sure you practice Chris.

So it is about sticking at it, being a disciple and continuing the commitment to learn.

And the more we play his tune the more we will be convinced of its glory and overcome the world. This is what John is saying vv 4,5 *"This is the victory that overcomes the world **even our faith**. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."*

Keep playing the gospel tune and if you hit a few wrong notes don't let that stop you. Keep going because you know the tune is the right one, even if your performance isn't perfect. And in the end it is the perfect tune that is what really matters.

Let me share with you two examples of faith I came across this week.

Bernie Smith is a part of our Sunshine Beach congregation.

This week I visited Bernie who has recently taken up residence at OzCare nursing home. It was such an encouraging visit because Bernie's faith is so inspiring. Most people when they enter a nursing home go kicking and screaming; I'm sure I will as well, because who wants to lose their independence. But Bernie shows a quiet acceptance of her situation. At the end of our visit we prayed together and she offered the most beautiful simple prayer of trust in God; convinced that Jesus is the Son of God who is looking after her.

I received a mailing from **Scripture Union** this week which told the **story of April**. The article says, "What happens when the darkness is consuming you and you can't find your way out - when hope is gone and you believe you're completely alone?" This was April's experience. She dropped out of school in Year 10 and was on a downward spiral. God used a network of people including a school chaplain Bec to help turn April's life around. In April's words, she said, "*Chappie Bec was there the day I came back to school. I just instantly felt how much she cared for me.*"

Chaplains are people who believe Jesus is the Son of God and this inspires them to care and to hold out to students the victory that overcomes the world.

Today, **we come to the end of 1 John**. From the beginning we noted there are recurring themes in this book but they are not developed in any systematic way. They overlap and interweave in various ways.

They are like a complex piece of classical music and they interweave in different keys, with light and shade and variation in tempo. But we keep revisiting them throughout the book and the themes reach a crescendo here in the final chapter.

It is simply the case that we should enjoy each theme wherever we see it, as John seeks to pastorally encourage his congregation.

The theme that John finishes on is **faith**. Not a faith that just believes in goodness for goodness sake but a faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Listen again to v13, "*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*"

The Apostle John wants his flock to have a confident faith, a consistent faith in which his readers **Believe the truth and Live the truth**. This means, as we have already seen, walking in the light, obeying the truth, living pure lives and loving one another. John wants his flock to have a lived experiential faith with complete conviction.

Listen again to the way John finishes his epistle in v20, "*We know also 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 by being in his son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.*"