

BaptistWay Bible Series for November 21: Living by the logic of love and faith

November 4, 2010

Does the Christian faith offer real solutions to life's challenges? According to John, the answer is yes.

In 1 John 5, John offers six promises to anyone who believes. Each promise requires an investment from us, but this "work" isn't intended to be hard. Instead, it's meant to give us real victory in the midst of life's challenges.

What are these six promises? Let's review them:

Relationship with the Father

"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well" (1 John 5:1).

In this verse, God calls us to three things: believe Jesus is his Son, the promised Messiah; love him; and love one another. What do we receive in return? Intimate relationship with God through Jesus.

The "work" behind his command is faith and love. Since both are fruit of the Spirit, we should find this command easy. But too often, we allow other priorities to become more important than our relationship with God. We must remember to keep God first in our lives and to love others as ourselves.

Victory

"This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not

burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:3-4).

We tend to think of victory as freedom from life's challenges, but that's not the promise. According to verse 4, faith is victory. All of us—believers and nonbelievers—battle temptations, fight for what we believe and try to succeed in this world. But we fight with different weapons. Believers fight against one another, while we fight the battle on a spiritual level through prayer and righteousness.

As believers, our greatest weapon is faith in Christ Jesus. Our challenge is to keep our eyes focused on him and to obey him in all things. Then, with our eyes fixed on him, we'll be able to overcome life's challenges in ways that honor him.

Eternal life

"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" (1 John 5:11-12).

When we believe Jesus is who he says he is, we receive eternal life. To achieve this, we simply must accept the truth planted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Our "work" is to allow this truth to permeate our minds and hearts until we start looking and acting like a child of God. In order for this to happen, we need to spend time with God, praying and reading Scriptures. We must allow him to change us, creating new ways of doing and thinking that are more pleasing to him.

Assurance

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything

according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him” (1 John 5:14-15).

No other faith promises access to a loving God. But as Christians, we not only receive access to God, we’re promised a hearing. John says we can know God hears our prayers if we pray according to his will.

The challenge, then, is to know God’s will. As God’s children, our primary business is to understand our Father’s desires. We must learn to align our will with his so we won’t desire things he doesn’t approve of. Then we should allow him to help us pray so our prayers will be effective.

Peace

“We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him” (1 John 5:18).

Yes, the world is full of evil. But God holds us in his hand, so nothing can harm us. Knowing this, we can face every challenge with confidence and peace. Even during times of crisis, we can rest in the knowledge God is in control. “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

The work of God

Jesus told his disciples the real work of a Christian is to believe in the one God sent (John 6:29). Review the six promises listed above. Every one of them requires an investment from us. We’re asked to believe, love, obey, ask and rest. These aren’t difficult tasks. They’re simple attitude adjustments or new ways of thinking that can help us know God better.

You see, God desires intimate relationship with us. And like any loving

father, he wants to help us grow up well. He desires us to honor him through obedience and righteousness, so our lives will be a testimony that he is everything he promises to be. Let's honor him by doing the work he asks and stepping into the blessings he promises.

Food for thought

John teaches that victory over this world comes through our faith. Is believing that Jesus is Lord enough to give us real victory?

Can we be saved without making God our first priority in life? If we could learn better how to plug into Jesus, would we have more victory?