

1 John 5:1-5

The Wind Blows Where It Wills

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With George

*"How many roads must a man walk down
Before you call him a man?
How many seas must a white dove sail
Before she sleeps in the sand?
Yes, and how many times must the cannonballs
fly
Before they're forever banned?"
"The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind
The answer is blowin' in the wind"*

(Bob Dylan in 1962.)

Bob Dylan is saying that the truth is present, but humanity often ignores it. A couple of thousand years before Bob Dylan released this song, someone else said these famous words, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." Speaking to Nicodemus, Jesus was saying that you can't see the wind or control where it goes, but you can see its effects. The answer is not blowing in the wind... the answer is in God who, in the person of the Holy Spirit, blows like the wind. While you cannot see the Holy Spirit the spiritual transformation of the Spirit in a believer's life is evident. In his final chapter John brings us to the matter of faith that is born of the Spirit. Let's look at the nature of this faith, its manifestation and joy.

The nature of this faith "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." (v5) Saving faith is faith in Jesus. When you go to a restaurant, you sit down, hungry, excited for good food. Whatever you order you'll have the outcome of a satisfied stomach. The modern concept of faith is a bit like this. We're presented with a menu of options: Buddhism: Salvation (or nirvana) by liberation from suffering and the cycle of rebirth through the eradication of ignorance, craving, and attachment. Sikhism: Salvation by union with God achieved through devotion, remembrance of God's name and ethical living. Islam: Salvation by attaining God's mercy and acceptance through faith in Allah, righteous living, repentance, and obedience to his guidance. Hedonism: Salvation by maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain throughout life. Environmentalism: Salvation by restoring harmony between humanity and the natural world and ensuring the long-term survival of life on Earth. Consumerism: Salvation by achieving happiness, identity, and fulfillment through acquiring goods, experiences, and lifestyle upgrades. Fame culture: Salvation by becoming widely known and remembered/ gaining significance through public recognition and influence. There are many other options available on our so-called menu of faith today. If we view them like a menu then all of them will provide the same results, a satisfied stomach-salvation.

But that is wrong. There's only one way. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Jesus is THE Light of the World; THE Bread of Life; THE Gate for the Sheep; THE Good Shepherd; THE Resurrection and the Life; THE True Vine. There are not multiple options "blowin' in the wind". People argue that we are all biased and have suffered from the propaganda of the culture we grew up in. This has led to the rise of conspiracy theories where people now genuinely believe that man never walked on the moon (it was actually recorded in a Hollywood set) and that the earth is flat. When we unpick objective truth, we end up on very shaky ground. Jesus is not one of the many options. When I used to work in the police, I regularly shared the gospel with my unbelieving colleagues. But after a while, I noticed that I was presenting Jesus as "my belief" rather than "the Saviour." I would say things like "This is why FOR ME Jesus is the only way" or even simply, "What I believe is this..." I was succumbing to the pattern of the world of presenting Jesus as one of the options, the pattern that says, "What is true for me is true for me, but you can have a different truth and I don't want to step on that." We do need to be wise in how we share the gospel but we also must share the gospel where Jesus is in fact THE way and not A way. Jesus is the Messiah, God's son, come in the flesh. Fully God, fully man, whose death was real and necessary for salvation. He is our High Priest, before the Father, interceding for us now. He is the King of Kings and will one day return to judge the living and the dead. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah, (anointed one) The Prophet, Priest, and King who fulfils God's redemptive purposes. Jesus is the one who died on a cross, taking the full punishment for our sin on himself will bear no punishment. So there is no condemnation for those who are in him. Jesus, rose to glorious life on the third day, showing not only the power of God in him, and the satisfaction of God with him for the propitiation for our sin; but also, he conquered death, robbing it of its power and sting. So for all who believe in him, death will not be their end. The moment their heartbeat stops in this life, they will be with him, in his arms, looking into his eyes for eternity. Our faith is in him. Do you believe in Jesus?

"Everyone who believes is born of God." Being born of God is the cause of believing, not the result of believing. The new birth produces faith, rather than faith producing new birth., God is the originator of the work of salvation, the giver of faith. We receive faith from God and he leads us to confesses that Jesus is the

Christ. Paul says to the Ephesians, "You were dead in your transgressions and sins... gratifying the cravings of our flesh, following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions. It is by grace you have been saved." We are not saved because we have the intellectual capability to be convinced by a rational argument for Christ. A dead man cannot do that and we are dead in our sin! How could we who are dead hear a rational argument and say yes? We are saved because before all-time God elected us to be His own. This compels us to evangelism. God's elect will respond to His call. It might take years of sharing the gospel, it might take hours in prayer... but Jesus says "I know my sheep and my sheep know me... My sheep listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me" (John 10:14, 27). So proclaim Christ in all his richness and beauty, majesty and righteousness. Don't proclaim a half-Christ because Jesus's sheep won't recognise the voice of a lesser deity that can be counted alongside false gods like allah and buddha. This faith is a gift granted by God.

The Manifestation Of Faith What does faith look like in the believer? We love the children of God and we love God and carry out his commands. In fact, to keep his commands is to love God. Faith that does not lead to love is meaningless. Once we realise what Jesus has done for us, we respond to him and his children with love. Love for God and love and his children are inseparable. One proves the other. By loving others, we are saying "God is truth and his way is best." That sounds like true faith to me and looks like love and obedience. Notice how John says we show love to God by obeying Him. "In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands." (v3) Disobedience is a moral uprising against God who we should love and esteem above all else. When we involve ourselves in the dead things of sin, we are rebelling against our new selves, debasing ourselves and making ourselves less whole, less human. This is the command 'to love God and your neighbour as yourself'. All the other commands come out of these. We don't murder our neighbour because we love them and that's because we love God. Love and obedience are one and the same thing.

The Joy of Faith We might be battling with loving God with all our heart and loving our neighbour as ourselves. Or struggling with patience, gentleness, love and joy because it feels all too hard. "In fact, this is love for God: to keep 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. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God ." (v5) God's commands are not burdensome for us because faith is from God. This faith is God created, God sustained, God empowered and God enduring. This kind of faith overcomes the world, "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life." Sin doesn't taste good anymore "Who likes orange juice?" "Who likes orange juice after you've brushed your teeth?" This is what happens when we are granted faith in Jesus. Our palette changes. Sin doesn't work with our new heart. We're dead to that now. Obedience is not a burden or a penance or God making our lives miserable. It is him calling us to the new and better life we have in him. Love for others who have also been born of God is a natural outworking of that. Saving faith is receiving Christ as infinitely desirable and precious. We love him greatly above all things and are completely satisfied. Obedience and love are joyful. We can count it all joy to move across the world to proclaim the gospel to those who have never heard it or take a pay cut so we can give more time to evangelise, downsize our house to reduce our mortgage so we have more expendable income to give to the church and support its work. We can open our home and welcome in people for food and company even when it is not convenient. Our hearts are set on Christ who far surpasses anything this world can offer. Obedience is joyful because our heart's longing finds its home in the person of Jesus. 1 John I says that believers continue to sin and anyone who says they do not sin is a liar. But we are called to holiness. We can resist sin and increasingly walk in holiness by recognising that in Christ we are a new creation. Remember that before you're a man or a woman, a dad or a daughter, you are a child of God. Bear with your brothers and sisters in grace and love. Serve them in genuine and ordinary ways. Commit to them and give yourself for their benefit. That is love. That is the visible outworking of this faith we have in Jesus. Remember, "for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God." John is not giving these tests so that sensitive believers will despair. He is giving them so believers may have assurance. Do you believe Jesus is the Christ? Do you love God? Do you desire to obey him? Imperfectly, yes, but are these things true of you? Then take comfort. These are the marks of God's work in your life. Obedience to Jesus is a joy because we are living out our true selves. In Christ we are finally free to live as we ought to live. Free from sin. "The wind blows where it wills. You hear its sound but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." We cannot see the Holy Spirit, but we can see his effects. We can see the mark of Spirit-given faith in those who believe in Jesus. This kind of faith is gloriously empowering, visible, true, God-given faith.