

LIVING FOR GOD IN AN

UPSIDE

A STUDY IN THE EPISTLE OF I JOHN

DOWN

WORLD

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**Lesson 11  
"Birthmarks  
of Tattoos"**

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

Some babies are born with abnormalities of the skin that have become popularly known as birthmarks.

According to MedlinePlus, there are two basic types of birthmarks, “vascular birthmarks” which are made up of blood vessels that haven't formed correctly and “pigmented birthmarks.”

There are also [pigmented](#) birthmarks are made of a cluster of pigment cells which cause color in skin visible different colors resembling a cafe-au-lait spots.

- No one knows what causes many types of birthmarks, but some run within families.
- Often manifesting themselves as a misshapen wine stains or white discoloration

However, because certain placements of moles can add to a person's appearance, they've been coined as beauty marks instead.

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN ECISJN NMOD DTROM

Artificial beauty marks became fashionable in sixteenth-century France, and the fashion persisted into modern times where people get “tattooed birth marks.”



**Incidentally, there is a warning against tattoos in Lev. 19:28** You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I *am* the LORD.

A tattoo is a mark on the body made by inserting indelible ink into the dermis through puncturing or incision; therefore, the warning applies to “scarification.”

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

This prohibition falls in with several others given to Israel to separate them from the Canaanite pagan practices around them.

- The cutting of the body was related to the religious mourning process when relatives died.

There has been a renaissance of tattooing in Hawaii, although the practice was extinguished years ago.

The Hawaiian process involves lengthy protocols and prayers and which constitutes it as a sacred rite more than an application of artwork.

The Israelite law may prohibit this practice since it involves a self-imposed alteration of God's creation, unlike circumcision, which is commanded by God.

But there one thing about those who are children of the Most- High God, they are marked with a resemblance that is not outward or physical, rather is inward and spiritual.

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

I John Chapter 5 is one which chronicles the identity markers of all who name Christ as Savior and are part of the “Sonship of God.”

God’s idea from the beginning was to populate the world with people who would share His image and likeness – thoughts and will – in the environ in which He placed man.

**Gen. 1:27-28** So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. <sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "**Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.**"

- The text of Genesis says the cosmos (world) was created and organized to function on behalf of the people that God planned as the centerpiece of His creation.
- And because of the replicative nature assigned to Adam and Eve, they were to rule and reign in the same manner as God and replicate themselves in this earth.
- Thus, families were formed to be viewed as a unit, operating to manifest God’s plan for a world filled with people who have His image and likeness.

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

□ **Gen. 5:1-3** This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the **likeness of God**.<sup>2</sup> He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created.<sup>3</sup> And **Adam** lived one hundred and thirty years, and **begot a son in his own likeness, after his image**, and named him Seth.

➤ In the ancient world an image was believed to carry the essence of that which it represented

What draws the idol imagery and the child imagery together is the concept that the image provides the capacity not only to represent and **serve in the place of God** but also **to be** and act like him.

The tools God provided to accomplish that task include conscience, self-awareness and spiritual discernment.

I John 5 gives us another test of sonship and that is the test of **“truth”** expressed repeatedly in the chapter with **“we know”** (V2,15,18-20).

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

The one who believes the truth that Jesus is the divine Messiah (2:22; 4:2, 14–15; 5:5) gives evidence that he has been regenerated.

- **Faith, doing right** (2:29; 3:9–10), and **love** (4:7) are evidences of birth from God

**I John 5:1-5** Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. <sup>2</sup> By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. <sup>3</sup> For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. <sup>4</sup> For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

- Everyone who believes Jesus is the Messiah is God's spiritual child, and
- Everyone who loves God the Father God loves His children as well.
- We can be sure that we love the children of God, by having a passionate love for God and by obedience to his commands.

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

- True love for God means obeying His commands which do not weigh us down as burdens.
- All of God's children overcomes the world, for our faith is the victorious power that triumphs over the world.

John **links love to faith** (5:6–17; Psl. 85:10–11) in cyclical thought; that is to say, right belief and right conduct go together (v. 1).

There are several certainties found in this chapter and one of them is the certainty that God's people know they are Christians.

What is a Christian and does the world identify you as such? How does one become a Christian and can you help them to comprehend how this can happen for them?

The world trusts in religious works and good intentions, depending on the energy of the flesh, but a believer in Christ trust in the finished work of Christ that makes a child of disobedience into a child of God (John 1:12–13; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:3).

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

John describes the “**birthmarks of believers**” by using the phrase “**born of God**” which appears seven times in this epistle; stating they (1) **practice righteousness**, 2:29; (2) **do not practice sin**, 3:9; (3) **love other Christians**, 4:7; (4) **overcome the world**, 5:4; and (5) **keep themselves from Satan**, 5:18.

If we have God as our Father and love Him, then we will also love His other children and this love will lead to obedience (John 14:21; 15:10).

- Where there is love, there is a willingness to serve and please others.
- God’s commands are not irksome to us because we love Him.
- Even in the sinful world, parents must work and sacrifice to care for their children
- The question is do they care for them because of legal obligation or out of love
- Christians are not to love the world, belong to the world, or yield to the world.
- We are overcomers, overcoming the world, the devil (2:13–14), and the false teachers (4:4).
- And we overcome by faith in God’s Word, not by our own power or wisdom

## LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

Another “birthmark” of the Children of God is their intimate knowledge of Who Jesus Is

**I John 5:6-13** This is He who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. <sup>7</sup> For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. <sup>8</sup> And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. <sup>9</sup> If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. <sup>10</sup> He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. <sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. <sup>12</sup> He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. <sup>13</sup> These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to* believe in the name of the Son of God.

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

Sinners must believe that Jesus is the Christ and that He died for their sins before they can be saved and born into God's family.

**I John 5:5** stresses the **Person of Christ**, while 6–7 **His work on the cross** and this is connected to several suggested explanations of the phrase “**water and blood**” here.

- We may relate it to John 19:34–35, where John saw the blood and water come out of Christ's wounded side, thus proving that He had really died.
- Or, it may be John was answering false teachers who taught Jesus was just a man and “the Christ” came upon Him at the baptism, then left when He died on the cross.
  - John disagreed -- Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God at His baptism (Matt. 3:17), and proved to be the Son of God at the cross (John 8:28; 12:28–33).
- Further, the symbolism reminds us of the **brazen altar** (blood) and **the laver** (water of the Word) in the OT tabernacle. This laver was:

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

- ❑ The laver was placed between [the door](#) of the Holy Place and the altar.
- ❑ Made from the [bronze mirrors](#) of the women (Exd. 30:17-21) and is where priest washed their hands and feet before entering and coming out of the Holy place
- ❑ The **Bronze Altar** resided in the outer court of the Tabernacle and was the means by which one would gain entrance therein
- ❑ On this altar sacrifices were made (Lev.1:9) where the blood was shed and the sinner was pardoned, for without the shedding of Blood there is no repentance

John submits that the Spirit bears witness that Jesus is the Christ through the written Word of God and the entire Godhead agrees that Jesus is the Christ; and on earth, the Spirit, the Word (water), and the cross (blood) bear the same witness.

- God is verifying to the world that Jesus is His Son—yet people will not believe.
- Strange, they receive the witness of men, but reject the witness of God.
- But when we reject this witness, we make God a liar.
- We can rely on the inner witness of the Spirit as He uses the Word (v. 10; Rom 8:16 *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”*) as He uses the Word.

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

- John goes on **V 11–13** to clearly summarize the assurance we have in Christ.
  - God has proven and given witness that we have eternal life in Christ
  - Christian assurance is not a matter of “working up” a religious emotion; it is simply a matter of taking God at His Word.
    - ❑ Paul likewise agrees that Christian assurance rests in the character of God in **II Tim. 1:12**:
      - ❑ “I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.”
      - ❑ He trusted that God was good and would preserve him and in the goodness of God and His desire to preserve and save His people.
      - ❑ He rested in the words spoken by Jesus in **John 6:37** “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”
- Believers further bear the “mark of their birth” in how they “**Pray with Confidence**” as prayer in its most basic form is “dialogue or conversation with God.”
- Prayer is not meditation or passive reflection; it is **direct address to God**

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

- It is the communication of the human soul with the Lord who created the soul.
- Prayer is the primary way for the believer in Jesus Christ to communicate his emotions and desires with God and to **fellowship with God**.

The proper understanding of “**praying in the Spirit**” (Jude 20) is allowing the Spirit to give us the inward witness of God’s will, supported by the witness of God’s Word.

- There is a dichotomy between praying in the Spirit and its polar opposite: praying in the flesh
- Praying in the flesh relies upon human ability and effort, not necessarily seeking the will of God

Unfortunately, some take prayer to be a way of overcoming God’s reluctance to perform what we think is best

**I John 5:13-17** These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to* believe in the name of the Son of God. <sup>14</sup>Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will,

## LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

He hears us. <sup>15</sup>And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. <sup>16</sup>If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does not lead* to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is sin *leading* to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. <sup>17</sup>All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death.

John mentions praying specifically for another believer who has sinned in a way that might result in death (I Cor. 11:30).

This “**sin unto death**” is not some “**unpardonable sin**” that a believer unwittingly falls into, but a **deliberate sin** in defiance of the Word of God (Heb. 12:9)

- It is something that **other believers can see** and recognize as rebellion.
- Jeremiah was told not to pray for the rebellious Jews (7:16; 11:14; 14:11)

We need to make sure that we view these two verses as part of the larger theme concerning sin in this epistle of I John.

- John clearly stated that those who are truly born of God don't go on sinning (I John 3:9)

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

- John also lifts the ideal there is no perfectionistic way, even for those in Christ (1:8-10)
- Therefore, he presents a balance between the absolute necessity of the new birth, and when believers sin, they must confess and seek forgiveness
- That same balance is evident in I John 5:16-17, if anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life.

Contrarily, there are sins in which the sinner dies and this continual wrongdoing indicates a lack of fellowship with God and stands open to Divine retribution.

May we consider the woeful warning given to the Prophet Ezekiel while in Babylon:

**Ezekiel 14:12-14** The word of the LORD came again to me, saying: <sup>13</sup> "Son of man, when a **land sins** against Me by **persistent unfaithfulness**, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will **cut off its supply of bread, send famine** on it, and **cut off man and beast** from it. <sup>14</sup> Even *if* these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they would deliver *only* themselves by their righteousness," says the Lord GOD.

- ❖ V 13 God said He would cut off the food supply and send a famine (**rā'āb** – dearth; hunger) to destroy both people and animals

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

Encouragingly, the Bible reminds us that when we show true repentance and confession, the Father is quick to forgive and cleanse (1 John 1:9–2:2).

True prayer is much more than saying words to God, but involves searching the Word, letting the Spirit search the things of God (Rom. 8:26–28), and yielding to God’s will as we share our requests with Him.

Another “birthmark” of a believer is his/her manner of life and behavior – i.e., there is a certain way a Christian should act.

**1 John 5:18-19** We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. <sup>19</sup> We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway of* the wicked one.

**The “We knows” of 1 John are intended to** reenforce experiential security of what’s said: [In some verses John uses **ginōskō** (*Knowledge in progress*), and others **eidō** (*fullness of knowledge*)]

- **1 John 2:3** And hereby we do know that **we know** him, if we keep his commandments

# LIVING FOR GOD IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD

- **I John 2:18** “.... there many antichrists; whereby **we know** that it is the last time
- **I John 3:2** “it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but **we know** that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him [**eidō**—*fullness of knowledge*]
- **I John 3:14** **We know** that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren
- **I John 3:19** And hereby **we know** that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.
- **I John 3:24** And hereby **we know** that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.
- **I John 5:2** By this **we know** that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.
- **I John 5:15** And if **we know (eidō)** that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, **we know (eidō)** that we have the petitions that we desired of him.
- **I John 5:18** **We know (eidō)** that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself
- **I John 5:19** And **we know (eidō)** that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness
- **I John 5:20** And **we know (eidō)** that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him

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