

## The First Epistle of John

...so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1John 1:3)

1John 4:4-6

Review

Where is John writing from?

What heresy was he addressing?

What flavor of Gnosticism was John specifically dealing with?

What did the heretics teach?

How does John deal with this false teaching?

1John 1:6-10

Someone read 1Jn 4:1-6

The 3 tests:

Moral Test of Obedience or Righteousness (2:28 – 3:10)

Social Test of love (3:11 – 3:18)

A digression about the our assurance of salvation and our condemning heart (3:19 – 3:24)

Doctrinal Test of truth about Christ (4:1 – 6)

Someone read vv4-6

*You are of God*

Who is “you”?

“every spirit who *confesses* Jesus Christ has come in the flesh.”

Did Dennis cover the nuance of “confess” last week?

To profess, to declare openly, to speak out freely

To live according to the principal of the incarnation, to reflect on it and commit oneself to it.

Cf, Ro 10:9, Ph 2:11

“You” is emphatic in the Greek, as is “they” in the next verse, and “we” in verse 6. As we will see, three different groups are in view in these verses.

*You have overcome them*

Who is “them”?

The false teachers

In what sense do we “overcome them”?

Not primarily morally (e.g., 2:13-14, in which the same word occurs), but intellectually.

The false teachers have not succeeded in deceiving you. Not only have you tested them and found them wanting, but you have conquered them. Hence, no doubt, they “went out from us” (1Jn 2:19).

Who is the “He that is greater”?

God, of course, but can we identify which member of the Trinity is implied?

Look at v6. And look at 2:20, 27. I believe it is the Holy Spirit.

And who is the “he that is in the world”?

The devil, who is called the “spirit of antichrist” in verse 3, and the “spirit of error” in v6.

We may thank God that even though Satan may be greater than we are, the Holy Spirit is far greater still. And by His illumination we may overcome all false teaching.

Here, as earlier, protection against error and victory over it comes from the objective standard of God’s Scripture and the indwelling Spirit who lights our path through it.

“Unless the Spirit of wisdom is present, there is little or no profit in having God’s Word in our hands,” John Calvin.

It is almost ludicrous to speak of God being greater than the Enemy. He is so incomparably greater that there is no contest whatsoever. This is where the eye of faith must always turn in hours of darkness, trial, and despair; turn to the Scriptures to learn how utterly greater He is than anything that is in or behind the world.

See Isa 40

God is greater – incomparably greater – than the wisdom of the Enemy. And His superior wisdom is available to you and me – even to the humblest Christian believer – if we combine being “of God” and being “little children.”

It is not by accident that John refers his readers as “little children.” It is generally a term of endearment and fatherly care (John being probably in his 90’s when he wrote this letter), in this context I think it carries a further connotation: We must exhibit a childlike faith in God’s Word, even if we do not always understand it. And we must

act upon it, regardless of how widespread are contrary opinions of men. If we do so, we can be assured that we will be protected from all entrapping errors.

Someone read vv5-6.

*They are from the world...*

Who is "they"?

The false teachers, once again.

And who listens to them?

The world

Why does the world listen to them?

Because the world is perverse, and the gospel is recast in the mold of the world. Accommodation (compromise) has no place in true Christianity. Whether it is placing science in the role of supreme authority, or whether a man-made religion is placed there, ultimately, it devolves into a false hope that leads to destruction.

As the old hymn says: "On Christ the solid rock I stand / All other ground is sinking sand."

*We are from God...*

Who is "we?" Is this the same group that appears in v4?

No – specifically, it is the apostles (contrasted with the false teachers of the previous verse).

*He who knows God listens to us..*

Is this awfully arrogant of John to say?

Who was John? Did his authority as an Apostle give him the right to say something like, "whoever knows God agrees with me, those who are not of God disagree with me."

Does John derive his authority by virtue of being a member of the clergy (i.e. The Roman Catholic Church)?

Notice that John is expanding on the test of the first 3 verses: There, the true believer must acknowledge the divine-human Person of Jesus Christ; here the test is whether it is accepted by Christians and rejected by non-Christians.

There is an affinity between God's people and His Word. This truth was proclaimed by Jesus Himself (John 10:4, 5, 8, etc.; 18:37, 8:47. There is a direct correspondence between the message and the hearers. The Spirit who is in you (v 4) enable you to discern His own voice speaking through us (v2).

So, one can recognize God's Word because God's people listen to it, just as one can recognize God's people because they listen to God's Word. Those who refuse to hear the teaching of the Apostles, but prefer the teaching of men, not only pass judgment on themselves, they also pass judgment on the message to which they give attention.

All this goes back to John's insistence the assurance of salvation and safety from error is to be found in the message his readers heard "from the beginning" (e.g., 2:7, 24, 3:11).

*By this we know...*

By what?

The word "know" (*ginōskōn*) in Greek means "the one who keeps on getting acquainted with God, growing in his knowledge of God" (Robertson).

We can discern truth from error by examining not only the message proclaimed by the human instruments of God, but the character of the audience which listens to them.