

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 5:1-2

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 vv4:13-21

Someone else read vv5:1-6

At long last, we are approaching the end of our studies in the First Epistle of John. In this section we come to the last theme which John discusses. I have occasionally referred to the fact that chapter divisions are not inspired. The divisions are the work of men – specifically the translators of the old KJV – and they have been duplicated in every major and almost every minor translation produced since. They are quite often very poorly placed. I have – at times - indicated that a chapter division ought to be ignored; that it does not represent a break in thought.

But such is NOT the case here. Here is a proper break in thought.

In this last chapter the apostle is discussing the fifth of the series of themes that he has taken up in this epistle.

1. The theme of fellowship of Christ and maintaining that fellowship
2. Maintaining Truth
3. Maintaining righteousness
4. Maintaining Love
5. And now, he addresses how we can maintain assurance or confidence that we are Christians. He has given various tests along the way, but here he really kicks into high gear.

The relationship between these five themes is very important. It is instructive to note that the first of these links with the last, i.e., fellowship with Christ ends in assurance or confidence. Everyone wants confidence today – it's what we are all looking for. Which of us does not desire to be an

adequate person, confident, self-assured, poised; able to cope with life? This is the image of humanity that is idealistically present in every human heart -- we each want to be this kind of person, and this is exactly what Christianity is designed to produce!

To me, the glory of our Christian faith is never that it is religious, but that it is so gloriously *relational*. It is designed to produce life, to fit us for living, and thus to be the kind of person that God intended man to be when he made him in the beginning -- confident, able, adequate. Now the secret of that confidence is fellowship, thus joining these two themes together -- the first and last. Fellowship is the sharing of the life of Jesus Christ. We shall see more of that as we go on in this passage. But this also explains the three intermediate themes that John discusses. This confident life will be manifest in a three-fold way: as truth, as righteousness, and as love. And there you have the exceedingly orderly division of the First Epistle of John.

These three form the test of authentic Christianity: truth, righteousness, and love. John says three specific times in this letter that, if you claim to know God, but yet walk in the darkness of disobedience, you are a liar (v 1:6). He does not hesitate to use this extremely direct term. You are a liar, he says. If you claim to know God and yet you walk in disobedience, you lie and do not tell the truth. There is an absence of righteousness in the life, and this puts the lie to all your claims to be a Christian. In another place, Chapter 2, he says that to claim to possess the Father and yet deny the deity and incarnation of the Son is also to be a liar (2:4).. There is an absence of truth in the life, and therefore it is not genuinely Christian. There cannot be a genuine Christian life and yet a denial of the deity and incarnation of the Son.

Thirdly, to claim to love God while you ignore or mistreat your brothers and sisters, is to lie (4:20). You are a liar if you say you love God and yet you do not love your brothers. This is the absence of love. And, as I pointed out last week, Satan is the father of lies and when we lie, we dwell in his realm (GJohn 8:44).

The presence of habitual sin, of a denial of Christ, doctrinally, and of selfish hatred despite a professed Christian experience, will expose all claims to Christianity as false. These three must all be present. This is the whole argument of the Epistle of John. They must all be present and in ever-increasing degree. Truth, love, and righteousness; these are the marks of authentic Christianity.

Now, in this last section which deals with assurance, the apostle brings all three of these together. In the passage we take now we shall find these intertwined together; one coherent fabric of life from God, which produces assurance and confidence and victory, and is manifest as righteousness, truth and love. That is Christianity. Anything less is simply not Christianity.

Someone read vv 1-5:

Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God, and every one who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:1-5 RSV)

Notice, in Verse 1, that truth and love, John says, belong together. One produces the other. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God," or, literally, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves the child." Thus, he ties together these two great themes, belief in the truth, and love, and one is the result of the other. In Verse 21 of Chapter 4, he has just been talking about loving our brother. This is a command from God, he says. "He who loves God shall love his brother also." Now he answers a question that is continually being asked, though not always expressed vocally. "What does it mean to love my brother?" "Who is my brother, anyway?" The answer is in Chapter 5, Verse 1: "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten of God." There is your brother. Such a one is part of the family. Thus, if you love the Father, you will love the other children of the Father anywhere you meet them. This is inevitable. If you, yourself, really share the life of the family of God, you will love the other members of the family.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the ^[1] Christ is ^[2] born of God,

“Believes”

This word is in a Greek tense that is the strongest possible NT term for faith or belief

Thayer defines it:

1b1) used in the NT of the conviction and trust to which a man is impelled by a certain inner and higher prerogative and law of soul

1b2) to trust in Jesus or God as able to aid either in obtaining or in doing something: saving faith

“Jesus is the Christ”

The heretics taught that the Christ-spirit was not to be identified with the Man Jesus of Nazareth. Cerinthus, who apparently was a contemporary of John's in Ephesus, taught something like this. And what does John call those who deny Jesus came in the flesh?

According to Irenaeus, [Polycarp](#) told the story that [John the Apostle](#), in particular, is said to have so detested Cerinthus that he once fled a [bathhouse](#) when he found out Cerinthus was inside, yelling "Let us flee, lest the building fall down; for Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is inside!"^[6] One tradition maintains that John wrote his first two epistles to counter Cerinthus' heresy. Irenaeus wrote his *Against Heresies* in part to specifically refute Cerinthus.

“born of God”

It is literally “out of God had been born or begotten.”

This emphatic term stresses the origin or source of the believer's birth. It is in a tense in Greek that looks back to a single event – the point at which we came to saving faith – with lasting effects in our lives.

“and whoever loves the Father ^[3] loves the child born of Him.”

Is the word "Father" capitalized in your translation? Should it be?

The word "father" does not actually appear in the original. The word is implied by the term that IS there: "begotten"

Thayer's definition:

- 1) of men who fathered children
 - 1a) to be born
 - 1b) to be begotten

I like the way the New English Translation renders this verse:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been fathered by God, and everyone who loves the father loves the child fathered by him. (1 John 5:1 NET)

We all, I think, can agree on the general sentiment expressed here: If we love our fathers, we will love our siblings as well. But, is this a proverbial saying, or something more than that? Commentators and translators are clearly divided, as shown by the capitalization – or not – of the word "father." What do you think?

- (1) as a general statement, proverbial in nature, applying to any parent: "everyone who loves the father also loves the child fathered by him."
- (2) This has also been understood as a statement that is particularly true of one's own parent: "everyone who loves his own father also loves the (other) children fathered by him (i.e., one's own brothers and sisters)."
- (3) This could be understood as a statement which refers particularly to God, in light of the context ([1Jo 5:1](#) (i.e., 1 John 5:1a)): "everyone who loves God who fathered Christians also loves the Christians who are fathered by God."

Without doubt options (2) and (3) are implications of the statement in its present context, but it seems most probable that the meaning of the statement is more general and proverbial in nature (option 1). This is likely because of the way in which it is introduced by the author with $\pi\alpha\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma\ \acute{\omicron}$ (*pas ho*) + participle. The author could have been more explicit and said something like, "everyone who loves God also loves God's children" had he intended option (3) without ambiguity. Yet that, in context, is the ultimate *application* of the statement, because it ultimately refers to the true Christian who, because he loves God, also loves the brethren, those who are God's offspring.

What a condemnation this is of all denominational and sectarian spirit. I am afraid that oftentimes Christians feel they are responsible to love only those who belong to their particular group, whatever it may be. If we are Presbyterians, we love Presbyterians, but we do not like the Episcopalians or Methodists. All too frequently we run into this attitude. If I am Baptist, then I love all those who believe in immersion (all other Baptists) and that is quite an extensive group.

Sometimes it is even more limited than that, and we may say, "I love only those who belong to my particular brand of Baptist churches." Or we may love only those who belong to the National Association of Evangelicals, and anyone who belongs to the National Council of Churches is automatically excluded.

But all this is a denial of what John is saying here. We are to love the members of the family, wherever they are. Our brother is he who shares the life of Jesus Christ, who is born of God, who believes that Jesus is the Christ. Now, of course, this is more than a mere creedal belief. As we are gathering here, there are thousands of other churches across this land, and around the world, where men and woman are standing up and confessing Christ in the Apostolic Creed. They stand together and recite:

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; etc."

Is everyone who says that a Christian? The answer is, of course not. John is not talking about a mere creedal confession. John's idea here is, every one who believes that Jesus is Lord (for the Lord, Christ, is the word for Messiah, the Lord, the divine Person who was to come into human history). Every one who believes that Jesus is his Lord, his supreme concern and authority in life, the one around whom his life is built), then that one is in the family. It does not make any difference whether he differs with you about the pre-tribulation rapture, or the method of baptism, or whatever else it may be, if he has the life of the Father and believes that Jesus is Lord, then he is a brother.

Now this begs the question: "Do you mean that Christians are to love only other Christians and no one else?" See Matt 5:44, Luk 10:29ff). But we can start there. Love always begins within a family circle. We first love the members of our own family before we find it possible to love those outside. If love begins there, it will reach out finally to encompass the world as well. The love of a Christian is never limited merely to other "brothers," those who share the life of the Lord Jesus, but it must at least begin there.

The general idea is, that as all Christians are the children of the same Father; as they constitute one family; as they all bear the same image; as they share his favor alike; as they are under the same obligation of gratitude to him, and are bound to promote the same common cause, and are to dwell together in the same home forever, they should therefore love one another. As all the children in a family love their common father, so it should be in the great family of which God is the Head. *Barnes Notes on the Bible*