

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 5:11-13

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 vv5:1-5

Someone read vv5:6-15

Suppose someone should come up to you and you tell them some statement of fact. They say to you, "Well, you know, I'm trying to believe you." How would you respond?

Wouldn't you take it as an insult? Wouldn't you feel that they were questioning your integrity, your character?

If they say, "I wish I could believe what you say," would you not say, "What do you mean? Why can't you believe what I say? Do you think I'm a liar?"

How much greater cause has God to say that to us when he has given us the record, engraved in history, and confirmed by the witness of the Spirit within? Yet men have the arrogance to say to him, "Oh, I'm trying to believe. I wish I could believe. Oh, that I could convince myself that what you're telling me is true!"

John moves now to the heart of the matter in verses 11-13:

And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life.

I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. {1 Jn 5:11-13 RSV}

Let's consider v11.

The great Greek grammarian Robertson wrote about the word “testimony:”

The sum and substance of it, with respect to the person of Christ, and the security of salvation in him, who is the true God, and eternal life:

It comes from the Greek term *Martyria*, where we get what word in English? And, it is used in the NT in this sense. See Rev. 17:6 in the KJV, NKJV, ESV. Martyrs die for what? Their testimony, their faith. And it need not be those whose faith is based on seeing with their own eyes.

As the TDNT says,

Hence witness can still be given even by those who are not eyewitnesses, i.e., by those who confess who Jesus was and what he signified.

And, indeed, most martyrs died for their conviction that Jesus was the Lord and Savior without actually seeing Him.

And what does John says the testimony is?

That God gave us eternal life.

The terms “eternal life” are in a grammatical structure that emphasizes the qualitative aspects of both terms.

The whole point of the matter is that God has given to man the thing he lacks, eternal life. Not life in quantity, although it does include that -- it is endless life -- but primarily life in quality. Life abundant, life exciting. Life that is adventurous, full, meaningful, relevant, all these much-abused terms that are so widely used today. Life that is lived to the fullest, that is God's gift to man. He who has the Son has life, because the Son is life. That is the whole point of this letter.

And the verb rendered “gave” in the NASB should really be “has given” (as in the KJV, NIV, NET, NKJV) is in. Why is this significant?

Because we get to enjoy “eternal life” right now!

Further this phrase emphasizes “eternal life” by placing these terms at the beginning of the clause: Literally, “that life eternal he gave, God, to us.” This has the effect of making this life the key concept of God’s testimony.

God decisively made this gift available in the saving ministry of His incarnate Son, and it becomes ours when we come to faith in Him. Right now!

As one commentator puts it: "Our part is but to receive God's bounty pressed upon us in Christ; it is merely to consent to the strong purpose of His love."

Someone find Phil 2:13 and read it, please.

"Both the willing and the working (the energizing)." God does it all, then. Yes, but he puts us to work also and our part is essential, as he has shown in [Phi 2:12](#), though secondary to that of God. (RWP)

Notice how John makes the qualitative noun definite in the second half of this verse: "this life." (literally "the life").

Dr. H. A. Ironside used to tell of a man who had great doubts about whether or not he was a Christian. One day he went home after hearing a sermon on the verse, "As many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God. He that believes on the Son has eternal life," {cf, John 1:12, 3:36}. He got down on his knees and said, "Now, Father, I want to settle this question. Show me whether I have eternal life, or not." And opening his Bible, his eyes fell on these verses, "He who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne to his Son." He said in his prayer, "Father, I don't want to make you a liar and it says here that if I don't believe the testimony that you give about the son I'm making you a liar. Now I don't want to do that. What is the testimony?" And he read the next part, "This is the testimony," and he stopped right there. He was so overwrought that he put his thumb over the rest of the verse and said, "Lord, it says here that if I don't believe the testimony that you gave concerning your Son, I'm making you a liar, and I don't want to make you a liar. I believe that I've got what that testimony is right under my thumb here, and I'm going to take my thumb off and read it, and Lord, help me to believe it, because I don't want to make you a liar." With great trepidation he raised his thumb and read, ". . . that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." All of a sudden it came home to him. John makes it so clear, "He who has received the Son has the life; and he who has not received the Son has not the life." No matter what else he may have, no matter how religious he may be, if he has not received the Son he does not have life. He entered into peace and became a preacher of this great truth.

This is the testimony. God has given us something, and it is wrapped up in a person, the Son of God. If you have received the Son, you have his life -- manifested, of course, by the things John has been talking about in this letter: righteousness, truth, and love. If you have not received the Son of God, no matter how earnest you are, no matter how devoted, no matter how religious you have been, seeking to do everything you could think of to please God, if you do not have the Son, you do not have life.

That is the issue! Either you have him, or you do not have him; either you know Jesus Christ, or you do not know him. There is no middle ground, it is one or the other. So, John concludes,

I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, [in order] that you may know that you have eternal life. {1 Jn 5:13 RSV}

I often share this verse with the guys in the jail and others of the Arminian persuasion, that have doubts that they are truly saved.

The purpose of John's letter is to move us from doubt to certainty -- "that we may *know* that we have eternal life." What about you? When we partake of the Lord's Table, as we did this morning, the very symbols speak to us of the great historical facts upon which our faith rests. But there is no value in the elements, there is nothing that will give you help by eating the bread or drinking the wine. They do nothing. They're but symbols. Have you received the Son? That is the question.

He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life. {1 Jn 5:12 RSV}

This phrase explains why it is only when we have faith, and are in union with Christ, that we can obtain the gift of eternal life. Faith is crucial. As the commentator Boice writes: "It is AS impossible to have life without having Christ AS it is impossible to have Christ without at the same time possessing eternal life."

It is also important to note that it is a reciprocal relationship. We have this life IN Christ, but at the moment we come to faith, God through Christ lives IN us. And obviously, the opposite is true as well. In both cases, the word "Life" has the definite article ("the"), which reinforces the idea that *eternal* life is in view. This is "the" life that the unbeliever needs so desperately, and which he so adamantly rejects, until and unless he bends his knee to the Son.

WHOEVER TAKES THE SON GETS IT ALL

There once was a fabulously wealthy man who loved his son above all things. To stay close to his son, they began to build an art collection together. Every spare minute, they were out at auctions and sales acquiring rare works of art: everything from Picasso to Raphael. By the time the Vietnam conflict broke out, they built one of the rarest most valuable collections in the world. A letter came one day informing the son he had been drafted. The father offered to pull some strings, but the son felt compelled to serve his country as his father and grandfather did before him.

The son went off to war, but he wrote his dad everyday. One day the letters stopped. The father's worst fears were realized when he received a telegram from the war department informing him his son had been killed while attempting to rescue another soldier. About six months later, there was a knock at the door. A young soldier with a large package under his arm said, "Sir, you don't know me, but I am the man your son saved on that faithful day he died deep in the jungles of Viet Nam. He had already saved many lives that day, and as he was carrying me off the battlefield, he was shot through the heart and died instantly.

Your son was my friend and we spent many a lonely night "in country talking about you and your love for art." The young soldier held out his package and said, "I know this isn't much and I'm not much of an artist, but I wanted you to have this painting I've done of your son as I last remember him. The father tore open the package and fought back the tears as he gazed at a portrait of his one and only son. He said, "You have captured the essence of my son's smile in

this painting and I will cherish it above all others." The father hung the portrait over his mantle. When visitors came to his home, he always drew attention to the portrait of his son before he showed them any of the other masterpieces.

When the father died the news went out that the entire collection was being offered at an exclusive private auction. Collectors and art experts from around the world gathered for the chance of purchasing one of them. The first painting on the auction block was the soldier's modest rendering of his son. The auctioneer pounded his gavel and asked someone to start the bidding. The sophisticated crowd scoffed and demanded the Van Gogh's and the Rembrandts be brought forth. The auctioneer persisted. "Who will start the bidding? \$200? \$100?" The crowd continued to turn up their noses, waiting to see the more serious paintings. Still the auctioneer solicited, "The son! The son! Who will take the son? Finally a squeaky voice from the back said, "I'll bid \$10 for the son." The bidder was none other than the young soldier the son had died saving. He said, "I didn't come to buy anything and all I have is \$10 to my name, but I bid it all." The auctioneer continued seeking a higher bid, but the angry crowd began to chant, "Sell it to him and let's get on with the auction." The auctioneer pounded the gavel and sold the painting for the bid of \$10. An eager buyer from the second row bellowed, "Finally, on with the auction." And just then the auctioneer said, "The auction is now officially closed." The hostile crowd demanded to know how after coming all this way could the auction possibly be over? The president of the auctioning company came to the microphone and said, "When I was called to conduct this auction, I was told of a stipulation in the will I could not divulge until now. According to the wishes of the deceased only the painting of the son was to be sold today and whoever takes the son gets it all. So today, for \$10 this young man has bought one of the world's most priceless art collections and the entire estate in which it is housed -- auction closed." And with the swing of the gavel, the crowd sat in stunned silence staring at the young soldier.

So, I repeat my question: Do you have the Son?