

SESSION 4

THIS IS HOW WE KNOW

1 JOHN

TABLE TALK

- ▶ Read 1 John 5:1-5
- ▶ How does this text illumine or reiterate what has come before?
- ▶ What questions does it raise?

TEXT

1 JOHN 5:1-2

- ▶ We have already learned that the proof of loving God is loving God's children (v. 1)
- ▶ Now the obverse is stated: Proof of loving the children of God is loving God and obeying his commandments (v. 2)
- ▶ The logic works like this: Loving the believer, who is a child of God, will be the natural reaction of anyone who loves God and believes Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

1 JOHN 5:3-5

- ▶ The commandments of God = the commandments of Christ (v. 3)
- ▶ Ref. John 14:15 - to love God/Christ is to keep his commandments
- ▶ The commandments are not "burdensome" –believers should gladly and joyfully obey the command to love one another
- ▶ v. 5 - on conquering the world - ref. John 16:33
- ▶ Those who have conquered the world have risen above it so that it no longer taints or influences them
- ▶ The one who overcomes the world is the believer who believes specifically that Jesus is the Son of God, who obeys him, who loves, and has his/her identity in Christ

TABLE TALK – 1 JOHN 5:6-13

- ▶ Read this section - how does it connect or summarize what John has said so far?
- ▶ What is the "testimony" to which John is referring?

1 JOHN 5:6

- ▶ Subject matter is Jesus, the witness to him and the life he brings—ref. prologue (1:1-4)
- ▶ Reference to "water" and "blood"
 - ▶ Reference to Jesus' baptism and death?
 - ▶ Reference to sacraments?
- ▶ More likely a reference to Jesus' birth and death - incarnation (4:2; 5:18)
- ▶ Fits with context: John reminding them of Jesus' humanity - schismatics denied soteriological significance of Jesus' birth and death, which is to deny Jesus is the Christ

1 JOHN 5:6B-8 - THE SPIRIT, THE WATER, AND THE BLOOD

- ▶ There are three great witnesses to the truth: the birth and death of Jesus and the Holy Spirit
- ▶ These are the things that confirm God's love and activity in the world
- ▶ Jesus came to the world through his birth, saved it through his death, and comes now via the Holy Spirit
- ▶ These are the means through which the believer has life, light, faith, power, hope, and love.
- ▶ The Spirit can be believed because the Spirit is "truth" come in person
- ▶ Passage is connected to the Farewell Discourse: John 14-17
- ▶ Judaism: truth confirmed by two reliable witnesses. John offers three and they all agree

1 JOHN 5:9

- ▶ A "lesser to greater" form of argument
- ▶ If one believes human testimony about Jesus, how much greater is God's testimony to his Son through the Holy Spirit?
- ▶ The three-fold witness is the three-fold divine testimony to Jesus

1 JOHN 5:10-13

- ▶ The one who believes this three-fold testimony has assurance that his her faith is not in vain.
- ▶ By contrast, those who reject this three-fold testimony make God into a liar, ignoring the overwhelming testimony God has given about his Son.
- ▶ What is that testimony? God gave us eternal life and this life is available only through his Son
- ▶ Without the Son, one is spiritually dead—John may be referring to people like his opponents here
- ▶ John is validating the importance of a high Christology - it is the way to eternal life (v. 12)
- ▶ That's the reason he is writing (v. 13)

TABLE TALK: 1 JOHN 5:14-21

- ▶ Read the passage together
- ▶ How does John suggest we pray?

1 JOHN 5:14-15

- ▶ Reads like a postscript to the homily/letter
- ▶ Encourages readers to pray in boldness, asking for anything according to "his" will (in the name of Jesus to the Father) - parallel to John 14:13
- ▶ Notice the key phrase: "according to his will"
- ▶ Not a blank check - John does not promise that we "shall obtain" but that we "have obtained" the requests made of God - we have gotten what we asked for/needed
- ▶ What have we "obtained?" Eternal life (v. 13)
- ▶ Need we ask for anything more?
- ▶ For John, prayer is the means by which our desires may be redirected into the will of God

1 JOHN 5:16

- ▶ This is the reason we pray for those who are sinners—they are those whom God longs to help—to bring into his will
- ▶ We intercede for others that they may have "life"

1 JOHN 5:16-17 – NOT MORTAL AND MORTAL SIN

- ▶ What is the “mortal sin” distinction?
 - ▶ Unconfessed sin? (ref. 1:9)
 - ▶ Sin of John’s opponents? - “antichrists” - denial of Christ
 - ▶ Denial of Christ and failure to obey his commandments are the sins that lead to spiritual death for John - those “mortal” sins are beyond the pale
 - ▶ All wrongdoing is sin, but the sin of rejecting Jesus is the one that leads to ultimate death
 - ▶ Sin that is “not mortal” may still be committed by believers, but need not lead to death if there is repentance
 - ▶ See also Jesus’ warning in Matthew 12:32

1 JOHN 5:18

- ▶ Those born of God “do not sin” - they participate in God’s new creation, they are in Christ.
- ▶ But while nobody’s participation is perfect, in Christ the community has resources to deal with sin via forgiveness and koinonia
- ▶ If you are in Christ, if you believe in him, sin can be overcome with the help of the Holy Spirit and the community - sin does not “reign”
- ▶ If, on the other hand, you reject Christ, sin leads to death because one does not have the necessary resources to deal with it

1 JOHN 5:19-20

- ▶ When we have assurance that we are God’s children (via the testimony, via obedience to his commandments, via the Holy Spirit’s witness) we know that we are not “of” the world—the world which lies under the power of the “evil one”
- ▶ We know that Son of God has come, given understanding and truth, and we are “in him” – Christ, the true God, and eternal life

1 JOHN 5:21

- ▶ A warning against idols
- ▶ Could this be what the "antichrists" are trying to get the community to worship?
- ▶ Someone other than or less than Jesus - false Christology
- ▶ A warning to galvanize the audience!

QUESTIONS?
