

He Who Has the Son Has Life
(1 John 5:6-13)
Expository Lessons from First Letter of John

I. Background and Review

- a. In this series we have looked at John's teaching on what it means to love others, and what it means to love God.
- b. In the previous lesson we focused on John's statement that loving God means that *we keep His commands*. Furthermore, these commands are not burdensome.

II. He Who Came by Water and Blood

- a. Read **1 John 5:6-8**.
 - i. "(6) 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. (7) For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. (8) And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one." (**1 John 5:6-8**, NKJV)
- b. There is a question regarding whether the text of **verse 7** was in the original.
 - i. The King James Version (and NKJV) and a few other translations (notably the Vulgate, the Latin Bible of the Catholic church which was translated in the late 300's; as seen in the Douay-Rheims version, the English translation which comes from the Vulgate) include **verse 7**; however, most modern translations do not include **verse 7**.
 - ii. The note in my NKJV acknowledges that only four or five late manuscripts (including the Textus Receptus, the manuscript basis for the King James Version and NKJV) contain what we have here in **verse 7**.
 - iii. Other modern translations read similar to the ESV, omitting **verse 7**. (Incidentally, they did not start adding verse numbers to Bibles until fairly late in history, around 1550).
 1. "This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree." (**1 John 5:6-8**, ESV)

- iv. Note that most modern translations do not include the statement. Some believers like this verse because it is useful to explain the trinity, in the statement that there are three who bear witness on earth: “the Father, the Word and the Spirit; and these three are one”.
 - 1. Of course, there are many other passages in Scriptures that point to the unity and divinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the trinity stands *regardless* of whether one accepts this particular verse as authentic.
- v. On the other hand, there is at least one early Christian writer, Cyprian, writing c. 250 AD, who appears to be quoting from **1 John 5:7**:
 - 1. “The Lord says, ‘I and the Father are one;’ (**John 10:30**) and again it is written of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, ‘And these three are one. (*apparently from 1 John 5:7*)”
 - a. (Source: Cyprian, *Treatises of Cyprian, Treatise 1 - On the Unity of the Church*; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 5, p. 423)
- vi. While most manuscripts may not have this verse, we do find it in Jerome’s translation of the Scriptures into Latin in the late 300’s; and Cyprian apparently refers to it c. 250 AD. So, there is some evidence for it in earlier versions. Regardless, there is plenty of evidence in the rest of Scripture to prove the unity and divinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit without needing this verse!
- c. The argument in this passage begins in **verse 6**, where it refers to Jesus as “He who came by water and blood”.
 - i. It seems to me that the emphasis John is making here is that Jesus really did appear in bodily form, with flesh and blood. He was fully human (as well as being divine). Again, here John appears to be addressing the gnostic-type heresy as we discussed in prior lessons, as Irenaeus had mentioned in his writings.
 - 1. Irenaeus was bishop of the church in Lyons, in modern-day France, writing c. 180 AD. According to him, some people were teaching that Jesus the man was not the same as the Christ, the Son of God; that the Son of God came down upon Jesus and it was the Christ, the Son of God (as opposed to Jesus) who was resurrected.
 - a. (For more on this, see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 3, chapter 16; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 443.)
 - 2. Verses in **1 John** that appear to be addressing this problem include:

- a. “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.” (1 John 2:22, NKJV)
 - i. According to Irenaeus, some were claiming (incorrectly) that the Christ came down upon the man Jesus, at the baptism of Jesus.
 - b. “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,” (1 John 4:2, NKJV)
 - c. “This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood...” (1 John 5:6, NKJV)
- ii. It strikes me that **1 John 5:6**, making the point that Jesus came not only by water, but also by blood, is another way of affirming that He fully took on human form, suffered and shed real, human blood. He was both fully divine and fully human.
 - 1. Perhaps the statement “who came by water” refers to His baptism, when the Spirit came down in the form of a dove.
 - 2. Consider also one of the primary themes in the book of **Hebrews**, that Jesus was tempted just like we are.
 - a. Since He suffered and understands what it is like to be human, He can relate to our weaknesses and struggles, and can intercede for us as mediator with the Father.
 - b. Also, He can show us (by example) how we should live our lives.

III. He Who Has the Son Has Life

- a. Read **1 John 5:9-13**.
- b. John makes a rather strong, exclusive “either/or” statement here.
 - i. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son does not have life. (**1 John 5:12**).
- c. The reason John is reminding them of this is explained in **verse 13**.
 - i. “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.*” (1 John 5:13, NKJV)
 - ii. While the KJV (and many other translations) say “that you may believe”, the NKJV translators rendered it “that you may *continue to believe*”, which can give a slightly different understanding.

1. This is an important distinction, since some (incorrectly) hold that all one needs to do in order to be saved is to believe (at one point of time). The historic understanding, supported by Scripture, is that our belief (our walk of faith) must *continue over time, to the end*, if we are to be saved on the Last Day.
 2. Let us recall the context here. The apostle John was writing to Christians, *who already had believed in Jesus*. John wanted them to *continue in their life of faith*, so that they could have confidence of eternal life.
- d. Here we see another example, one of many in the New Testament, that indicates only those following Jesus will be saved; that He is the only way. This implies that all who are not following Jesus (Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, atheists, agnostics) will not receive eternal life. Many believers find this idea very troubling.
- i. “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (1 John 5:12, NKJV)
 - ii. Jesus had said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6, NKJV)
 1. This is not a confusing statement. Jesus is clear here; and either He is telling the truth, or He is lying!
 - iii. After His resurrection, Jesus told His apostles, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:15-16, NKJV)
 - iv. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, told the Jewish rulers in Jerusalem how a crippled man had just been miraculously healed:
 1. “...let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is ‘the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ (Psalm 118:22) Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:10-12, NKJV)
 - v. Paul makes the same argument in **Romans 9-11**. There he says that anyone who “calls on the name of the Lord” may be saved, that involves first hearing and believing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, *even Jews* (who believe in the one God, and who acknowledge Abraham, Moses and the prophets) if they don’t believe in Jesus, *will not be saved*.

1. “For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.’ (**Joel 3:5**) How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!’” (**Romans 10:13–15**, NKJV)
- vi. Peter warned the Jews similarly by quoting from Moses, who spoke about Jesus.
1. “For Moses truly said to the fathers, ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’” (**Acts 3:22–23**, NKJV)
 2. Peter explained that Jesus was the Prophet that Moses had written about in **Deuteronomy 18:15-19**, the One whom the Lord would “raise up”. The Lord demonstrated that by literally “raising up” Jesus from the dead. As Moses himself had pointed out, the people must follow the new teachings of this promised prophet, *or else...!*
- e. This is a tough statement for many to accept, for two reasons:
- i. First, it sounds rather arrogant and self-righteous. Consider: “We’re right; and everyone else on the planet is wrong!”
 1. This is the theme song (‘We have a monopoly on the one way to God.’) of every cult out there, ‘Christian’ or otherwise.
 - a. It is a proven effective way of manipulating people (for controlling their lives and money, and compelling people to do things they otherwise would never do) on a massive scale.
 2. If you believe this (you and your group have an exclusive lock on the truth), there can be a tendency to *stop thinking*; to stop examining whether what you believe is lacking anything.
 3. There can be a tendency to look down on other people, to think you are better than they are; and that your group is better than anyone else’s. This feeds our human tendency toward pride and arrogance.
 4. Recoiling from the horrors that this exclusive attitude has fostered in the past, many want to run in the opposite direction and accept that there are *many roads* that lead to the truth (not just through Jesus).

- ii. The other problem is that if you accept the idea that only those following Jesus are saved, we are confronted with a horrible reality: the vast majority of people in the world are lost.
 1. If you combine that with the understanding that God wants all men to be saved (**1 Timothy 2:4**), that the fields are white for the harvest (**Luke 10:2, John 4:35**), and that Jesus wants the gospel preached to the entire world (**Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16**); this likely will *upend your life*.
 2. There goes your nice, comfortable life! It will have a profound impact on how you spend your waking hours, and what you are living for. It will impact your vacation and retirement plans, what you do with your discretionary or 'spare' time (when you are not working, eating or sleeping).
 - a. If anyone grasp the significance of this, he or she can no longer just live for pleasure and comfort like the rest of the world around us.
 3. You will be driven to find out what you can do to be effective in making disciples, knowing how to effectively administer the Word of God, supporting those who are involved in spreading the word here in the U.S. and overseas.
 4. You will be devoted to prayer and the Word of God, to sharing your faith with others, and spreading the message of the kingdom, using whatever opportunities and abilities God has given you, for that purpose.
- f. **Question:** How can one embrace what Jesus and the apostles taught (that following Jesus is the only way to eternal life), yet also avoid the temptation to become arrogant toward other people and other groups?
 - i. Recently, while reading a book on the history of Christianity in Asia and Africa (*The Lost History of Christianity*, by Philip Jenkins), I found a fascinating story of an encounter between a famous bishop in Asia and the Muslim caliph (both a religious and political leader), at the court of the caliph in modern-day Iraq, c. 800 AD.
 1. Note that the Christian faith came out of the western side of the continent of Asia; and spread both to the east and west from there.
 2. The Christian faith spread all the way across Asia, even to Beijing in China, by no later than 635 AD according to historical evidence we have. Whether the Christian missionaries or the Buddhist missionaries (Buddhism came from India) entered China first is debated.

- ii. The Christian bishop, named Timothy, was leader of the Church of the East (sometimes called a patriarch or catholicos, in the East), overseeing churches from Syria all the way across Asia to Beijing, China. The vast area Timothy was familiar with (encompassing essentially all of Asia) was home to many faiths: Jews; Buddhists (a religion originating in India, then starting to spread into China and Japan); Manicheans who followed a prophet named Mani; Zoroastrians of Persia; and various polytheistic religions where multiple gods were worshiped. Furthermore, Timothy was now under the rule of a new religion, the Muslims, who had recently come out of Arabia and conquered much of the Middle East.
- iii. We have the record of a very interesting dialogue between the caliph and Timothy. The caliph asked Timothy some very tough questions to challenge his Christian faith.
 - 1. I was stunned to see how his questions, posed 1200 years ago, and his claims are strikingly similar to what Muslims challenge us with today (3 'Gods' versus 1, the trinity; how God can have a Son; whether Christians changed the Scriptures; why Christians venerate the cross; whether Jesus was actually crucified; how Christians view Mohammad and the Koran; etc.).
 - 2. I also was struck by the wisdom and respect with which Timothy responded to the caliph's pointed questions.
- iv. At one point in the discussion, Timothy respectfully and tactfully goes on the offensive, explaining the Christian deposit of faith as the true valuable pearl in a world where many faiths claimed they had the truth. Here Timothy proceeded:
 - 1. "And I replied to his Majesty: 'O our victorious King, in this world we are all of us as in a dark house in the middle of the night. If at night and in a dark house a precious pearl happens to fall in the midst of people, and all become aware of its existence, everyone would strive to pick up the pearl, which will not fall to the lot of all but to the lot of one only, while one will get hold of the pearl itself, another one of a piece of glass, a third one of a stone or of a bit of earth, but everyone will be happy and proud that he is the real possessor of the pearl.
 - 2. "When, however, night and darkness disappear, and light and day arise, then every one of those men who had believed that they had the pearl, would extend and stretch his hand towards the light, which alone can show what everyone has in hand. He who possesses the pearl will rejoice and be happy and pleased with it, while those who had in hand pieces of glass and bits of stone only will weep and be sad; and will sigh and shed tears.

3. "In this same way we children of men are in this perishable world as in darkness. The pearl of the true faith fell in the midst of all of us, and it is undoubtedly in the hand of one of us, while all of us believe that we possess the precious object. In the world to come, however, the darkness of mortality passes, and the fog of ignorance dissolves, since it is the true and the real light to which the fog of ignorance is absolutely foreign. In it the possessors of the pearl will rejoice, be happy and pleased, and the possessors of mere pieces of stone will weep, sigh, and shed tears, as we said above.'
4. "And our victorious King said: 'The possessors of the pearl are not known in this world, O Catholicos.'—And I answered: 'They are partially known, O our victorious King.'—And our victorious and very wise King said: 'What do you mean by partially known, and by what are they known as such?'
5. "And I answered: 'By good works, O our victorious King, and pious deeds, and by the wonders and miracles that God performs through those who possess the true faith. As the luster of a pearl is somewhat visible even in the darkness of the night, so also the rays of the true faith shine to some extent even in the darkness and the fog of the present world. God indeed has not left the pure pearl of the faith completely without testimony and evidence, first in the prophets and then in the Gospel. He first confirmed the true faith in Him through Moses, once by means of the prodigies and miracles that He wrought in Egypt, and another time when He divided the waters of the Red Sea into two and allowed the Israelites to cross it safely, but drowned the Egyptians in its depths. He also split and divided the Jordan into two through Joshua, son of Nun, and allowed the Israelites to cross it without any harm to themselves, and tied the sun and the moon to their own places until the Jewish people were well avenged upon their enemies. He acted in the same way through the prophets who rose in different generations, viz.: through David, Elijah, and Elisha.
6. "Afterwards He confirmed the faith through Christ our Lord by the miracles and prodigies which He wrought for the help of the children of men. In this way the Disciples performed miracles greater even than those wrought by Christ. These signs, miracles, and prodigies wrought in the name of Jesus Christ are the bright rays and the shining luster of the precious pearl of the faith, and it is by the brightness of such rays that the possessors of this pearl which is so full of luster and so precious that it outweighs all the world in the balance, are known.'"
 7. (Source: *Timothy's Apology for Christianity*, vol. 2; translated by A. Mingana)

g. This beautiful illustration reminds me of so many of the teachings of Jesus.

- i. Jesus is the light that has come into a dark world (**Isaiah 9:2; Matthew 4:16; John 3:19, 8:12, 9:5**).
- ii. We Christians, His followers, are to be lights in this dark world (**Matthew 5:14, Philippians 2:15**). Our love and good deeds will make Christ known.
- iii. The pearl of great price that Jesus spoke of:
 - 1. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." (**Matthew 13:45-46**, NKJV)
 - 2. May we learn to recognize the one true pearl we have been given.
- h. Concluding thoughts.
 - i. May we focus on the one true pearl of truth itself; not on ourselves nor on our own group.
 - ii. May we embrace what Jesus said, which John reiterated: that Jesus is the only way to eternal life.
 - iii. Let us not over-react to the arrogant attitude we may have seen displayed by others or which we may have participated in ourselves in the past. Instead, we can imitate the more humble but honest way that Timothy respectfully presented the truth to someone of a different faith.
 - iv. Let us accept the consequences of having this wonderful pearl; like a physician who has stumbled on the cure for a disease that is wasting the lives of thousands.
 - 1. We have been entrusted with something that we need to carry forward, out of love for God and for others.
 - 2. This will produce a life of great sacrifice with significant personal cost, to the service of God and others.
 - v. As John has reminded us, very simply, "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (**1 John 5:12**, NKJV)