

Series: The Confident, Loving Church – week 22

CDOBC – beginning on 2/14/10

Title: **“The Christian Trifecta”**

1 John 5:1-5 ~ August 22, 2010

OBJECTIVE: To give believers priority of faith, love, and obedience.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- AWANA – leaders needed – leader / worker meeting 8/11 – 6:30 p.m.
- Quarterly Business mtg. - today after 2nd service
- All-church social at the YMCA – 8/29
- Men’s Breakfast on 9/11 – 7 a.m. – Great Adventure Men’s Conference 9/25

(Faith in Christ, love for other believers, obedience (overcomers) to God’s Word)

What’s most important in your life? What are the primary things you focus on each day – the things that guide you and define you and your family?

Most of us don’t think or live that way – we get up each day and take on what life presents to us each day.

Is money primary for you?

Is food? Fitness? Are good grades in school primary for your family? Church and faith activities? Is family one of the most important things in your life? Politics? Sports? Reading?

Hobbies?

For the Apostle John, as we begin chapter 5, we can see that he was trying to emphasize what the priorities of Christians should be.

So often people or groups focus their time and energy on things that aren’t primary. They *“major in the minors and minor in the majors”*. The result is they never reach their fullest potential and they simply exist in mediocrity instead of achieving great things and overcoming obstacles that block their success. This tendency plagues many Christians – not only in John’s day (1st century) but in our day as well. There are many, many things that are important

and worthwhile in the Christian life and in the life of the church...but what is of primary importance for each of us? What do each of us need to examine in our own life to insure success in our Christian life?

I'm calling these things the "The Christian Trifecta" – three things that are essential for us as believers. These three things are not issues of doctrine *only* – but three things that should be of primary importance for each Christian.

Turn to 1 John 5 (Read passage)

Jesus must be the center of our belief. vs. 1a, 5

Of utmost importance in our Christian life is a focus on Jesus.

John makes a couple of very clear statements here in our passage today. First, in vs. 1, he tells us that "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God..."

Then, in vs. 5, he says "Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

One of the first things to notice is how John tells us the object of our belief is important. Jesus is the focus of Christian truth. Not a watered down version of Jesus – but Jesus as Messiah – Jesus as God!

Another thing to notice in these two statements is the different terminology that John uses - "Jesus is the Christ" – "Jesus is the Son of God". There are some nuances unique to each of these phrases. Simply put, "Jesus is the Christ" focuses more on His role as Messiah and Savior – "Jesus is the Son of God" focuses more on His deity, power, and sovereignty. But John uses them as synonymous descriptions of Jesus.

John 20:31

"But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

In vs. 1 – John says “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...”. I want to focus on two words/phrases – “who believes” and “born of God”.

There are two common questions about Christian faith that John answers in this verse.

First, is everyone in the family of God? Is every person going to heaven?

The answer he gives is ‘NO’. Scripture is clear that God loves the world. But God’s love is proven not by saving all people (universal salvation / Universalism). He demonstrated His love for the world by sending His Son, Jesus, as our sin sacrifice...to take the penalty of our sins upon Himself. The fact that not everyone is saved is seen in the text - as John describes that faith or belief in Jesus is required for salvation. “who believes” is in the present tense in the Greek – which means the belief John has in mind is a current, ongoing belief. He is talking about the person whose belief defines their daily lifestyle – their choices and attitudes are governed by an active, daily belief.

“born of God” is in the perfect tense in the Greek – and therefore, this ‘birth’ that John is talking about is something that occurred at a previous time, but it has a continuing effect on their life today. To be “born of God” is not some isolated, ineffectual event that occurs in someone’s life that is separate from their life today. John is telling us in very clear terms, that a Christian is someone who was ‘born’ into the family of God at some point in the past – and the event of their spiritual birth makes a real, practical difference in their life today.

Second question...Are we able to make up our own mind about God – about Jesus – or does God work within us to enable us to believe? (Pelagian controversy / Calvinism vs. Arminianism)

The answer is that God works within us to enable us to believe. As I mentioned a few moments ago, “is born of God” is in the perfect tense which points to a completed action with continuing results. But it’s also in the passive voice – which tells us that the action of spiritual birth – being “born of God” – is not something we do – but something done to / for us. In other words, God causes us to be born again. In addition to the Greek grammar here which makes this case, we have the vivid imagery of conception – as John uses a term that speaks of God ‘fathering’ His children. So John paints a picture of a human father producing children – and the point is that in our spiritual birth, God is certainly not passive in the process.

The second primary thing for us as Christians is:

We must practice love for God and others. vs. 1b-3a

“...everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.”

What kind of family did the Apostle John grow up in?

Most of us know that love for our father / parents does not insure love of our siblings!

But – that’s not really what John is saying here. It is generally true that if there is a loving relationship between father and child, that the other relationships in that family will also be loving.

In 4:19-21, John explained that if we say that we love God, yet hate our brother – that we are a liar. According to the end of chapter 4, loving one another is how we show our love for God. Now, the Apostle helps us see this truth from a different perspective. Now he tells us that our love for other believers (“...the children of God”) is proven by our love for God demonstrated through obeying God’s commands. The beginning of vs. 3 is merely a restatement of the end of vs. 2.

Vs. 2b = “...by loving God and carrying out his commands.”

Vs. 3a = “This is love for God: to obey his commands.”

John is continuing to tell us how important love for one another is. If you love God – then love for His children is a direct result of your love for God.

How does this work? If this is true, then how do we deal with the problem that is all too evident in some churches where believers don’t love one another?

Well, it seems there can be two answers. **First**, the people in those churches are not Christians...they don’t really love God. John says they are a “liar” in 4:20 – and in saying that he’s referring to their claim to love God. **Second**, many Christians have failed to see the depth of their faith and the demands of their faith. For so many Christians, there is a time in their life that they have understood the truth about their sinfulness – and they understood what Scripture teaches about the holiness of God – and that because of this vast difference between them and God – something must reconcile them. They understand that Scripture tells us that faith in Jesus is the only way to be reconciled back to God...and that’s the end of the story! Of course they may attend church on a regular basis – they may change some of the more extreme aspects of their lifestyle – but they never allow their faith to dig deep into their heart and truly change their soul.

Illus. – Preschoolers left alone to have class by themselves is not much different than a church filled with Christians who never grow in their faith.

People looking in from the outside would never go in that classroom!

We need to obey God’s commands. vs. 2b-5

Obeying God's commands is akin to *loving others*.

As we've already mentioned, loving others and obeying God go hand-in-hand. They are so closely related that you can't separate them.

Obeying God's commands is not a *burden*.

In most religions, the rules and regulations are burdensome because they are sourced in self-will and self-determination. They are burdensome because they are done to earn salvation – to guarantee some measure of grace and mercy. As Jesus was ministering, the Pharisees, Sadducees and other religious rulers had added to Mosaic Law and worshiping God had become a great burden for the people.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Matt. 11:28-30

Jesus' offer of “rest” and a light burden is because obedience to the commands of God doesn't lead to our salvation – they are a result of salvation. We obey God because we are saved – not to earn our salvation.

Another reason so much of ‘religion’ is a burden for people is because they obey out of fear. They perform religious rituals because they are afraid of God's judgment upon them if they don't. However, for the Christian, obeying the commands of God is due to our love for God – not our fear of Him. As John just told us in 4:17-18 – we can be confident about God's judgment because of the love of God.

When we love someone, we don't see our work for them as a burden. To clean up the yard of a stranger may be a burden for me – but to clean up my parent's yard is not.

To paint a strangers room would be a burden – but to paint my son's room is enjoyable.

Obeying God's commands leads to victory.

Does *victory* describe your Christian life – or is defeat a better term.

In Greek mythology, Nike was the Greek goddess of victory. The term John uses here in vs. 4-5 is *nikaō* – which means to conquer, be victorious, to overcome the enemy.

The form of the word that John uses in the first part of vs. 4 is a present active indicative. Meaning it's something we do right now (present action), it's in the active voice meaning it's something that we do, and it's in the indicative mood, meaning that it's a certainty – an accomplished fact.

Are you born of God? Then you have been given every resource, ability, and power – to overcome the world.

What does it mean to overcome the world? It means that you defeat sin and other entanglements that battle against the truth of God in your life.

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”

1 John 4:4

“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”

Romans 8:37

“But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 Cor. 15:57

Vs. 4b - “This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.”

What does this verse mean? How is “...even our faith” connected to this victory?

“overcome” here is in the aorist tense – so it’s looking back at a completed action – and grammatically it’s connected to the ‘victory’. So the question is, “What victory has overcome the world?”

It seems most likely that John is referring to the victory of Christ over sin and death (John 16:33; 1 Cor. 15:57). At the end of vs. 4, John connects our faith to Christ’s victory – which makes us co-victors with Christ!

He then goes on to emphasize the point in vs. 5 – “Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

Application

Three primary things for all of us to put into practice...

Believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Make sure your faith is grounded in the Biblical truth about Jesus – not a watered down version of Christ that covers up and hides the truth.

Love one another.

Obey God's commands

This proves our love for one another – and our love for God.

When we do these things – we will indeed be overcomers!

Just do it!

Close in prayer