

I. Introduction

Please open to 1 John 5:1

- A. WW2: Germany had invaded and taken control of France. Allies decided to begin the liberation of Europe from the beaches of Normandy.
- B. Battle for the beaches of France went down in history as one of the greatest military achievements of all time.
- C. What gets less notoriety is the battle for the bridges.
 - 1. Before the beach invasion, they sent some units of glider infantry behind enemy lines to capture and hold strategic bridges.
 - 2. Why? Why not just get the beaches first and then literally cross those bridges when they came to them?
 - 3. Because they knew the tactic of the enemy: blow up the bridge. Without the bridges, those Allied troops are going nowhere (Netherlands, Arnhem)
 - 4. This morning, we're battling for bridges.
 - a. You can study and understand all you want about the CONCEPTS of FAITH, LOVE, AND OBEDIENCE ...
 - b. But if we don't keep these landmasses indestructibly connected and actually walk over the bridge between them, we're going nowhere.

I John 5:1 "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ ..."

II. Everything we'll discover today has, as its foundation, faith that Jesus is the Christ.

- A. But when we say Jesus was the Christ, what does that mean? In other words:
 - 1. **Who do you say Jesus is?** This was the defining question to the early church that this letter was written to, to the church today, and to you.
 - 2. Later in this passage (v 6), John reveals to us some aspects of Jesus=Christ. Jump there now. Then later we can plant 1-5 in fertile soil of Jesus' identity.

(1 John 5:6-12) "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. If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that He has borne concerning His Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in

the testimony that God has borne concerning His Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

B. Historical context

1. In this letter, John is guarding church from false teaching that was spreading/gaining traction.
 - a. Jesus was born as a common man, biological son of Joseph and Mary
 - b. Baptism: "spirit of the Christ" descended on Him
 - c. Before His crucifixion, the "spirit of the Christ" left Him and that He died on the cross having returned to the state of being a common, non-divine human.¹
 - d. In essence, what they were teaching was that the man Jesus was not divine, but merely took on a "cloak" of divinity for the three years of His earthly ministry.
 - e. There are so many problems with this teaching, but one of the biggest problems is stripping away the eternal divinity of Jesus.
 - 1) If Jesus was not divine His whole life—perfect life, spotless sacrifice, dying as God—then there is no salvation for humanity.
 - 2) If Jesus is less than fully God, you and I are less than fully forgiven.
2. John is affirming the teaching the apostles had given from the beginning.
 - a. Jesus = fully divine from eternity to eternity
 - b. "This is He Who came by water and blood—
 - 1) Jesus = already the Christ when baptized in water by John the Baptizer
 - 2) Jesus was still fully God, the Christ, when He shed His blood on the cross.
 - 3) **Jesus was born, baptized and crucified as God the Son, the only Savior of the world.**
 - c. Further explains: Jesus' work on Earth, from Baptism to Cross and Resurrection, is *outward* proof to us that He is God. And also the Holy Spirit testifies to us *inwardly* that this is true.
 - 1) If we deny the works of Jesus and the testimony of the Holy Spirit to our hearts that Jesus is the Christ, we indict God as a liar.
 - 2) There is no salvation for a person who rejects Jesus as the Christ Who takes away the sins of the world.

¹ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, book 1, Chapter 26 paragraph 1. Concerning the heresy of Cerinthus

3) Having a relationship of trust in Jesus, by GOD'S definition of Who Jesus is ...

- C. Feel this: eternal God died for you. His righteousness is YOUR righteousness.
1. We are going to spend eternity delving and mining down into the riches of this reality.
 2. WHO Jesus is, is the rich soil that we plant ourselves in as we live the Christian life.
 2. So **FAITH** in Jesus as the Christ is our first reality as children of God, but there's more! It gets better!

(1 John 5:1) "Everyone *who believes that Jesus is the Christ* has been born of God, and everyone *who loves the Father* loves Whoever has been born of Him."

III. THREE INSEPARABLE CONNECTIONS

- A. This is the first of three inseparable connections: **faith** and **LOVE**.
1. Person who trusts Jesus = person who *loves God*
 2. And not just love for God the Father, but also love for who? Each other!
 3. **There is no "loveless" faith in Jesus.** It doesn't exist. If you're not growing in love, this is a warning.
 4. If you trust in Jesus, you WILL love other people.
 5. Love for others does not attain your salvation
 - a. Love for others is CAUSED BY your salvation.
 - b. God has changed your nature. But that's not all! It gets better!

(1 John 5:2-3) "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments."

- B. Second inseparable connection: **love** and **obedience**
1. **Faith** in Jesus = **love** God and people = OBEY GOD'S COMMANDMENTS. (**Obedience**)
 2. **There is no obedience-less love for God and others**
 3. System of the world is constantly redefining things for us
 - a. Jesus' identity, and also LOVE'S identity. Inundated with false definitions
 - b. Love is not fed by sentiment, it's fed by OBEDIENCE.
 4. It is faith in Jesus that saves you and not your obedience. But that doesn't mean that obedience doesn't matter.
 - a. How am I saved? FAITH IN JESUS
 - b. How do I show love? Obey God's Commandments

5. Your obedience is vitally important. Because: KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDMENTS IS HOW WE LOVE.
- a. I have a suspicion that, like me, most of you have misunderstood the nature of God's commandments for most of your life.
 - b. If I were to ask you, "Why do you obey God's commandments?" many of us would say:
 - 1) "Because it's the right thing to do."
 - 2) "Because God has asked me to live up to His standard of morality."
 - c. But "What makes the 'right thing to do' right?", "What makes 'morality' moral?"
 - d. I think the words of Jesus Himself bring complete clarity to these questions:

(Matthew 22:36-40) "'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?' And He said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. *On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.*'"

- 1) What makes the "right thing to do" right? Because it's the loving thing to do.
- 2) What makes "morality" moral? Because it's loving way to live.
- e. Story of Dad and uncle Bill throwing the football...Grandma Dee told dad, "Go play with your brother!" Dad annoyed and so threw ball toward parked cars
 - 1) Outward, technical obedience, but no love. Obedience, divorced from love, is not obedience. It's just fearful compliance - hypocrisy.
 - 2) Augustine: "Wicked men obey from fear; good men, from love."
- f. Sin is sin because it is not from love
 - 1) Murder is not loving, lying is not loving, stealing is not loving
 - 2) Boasting, coveting, disrespecting, unforgiveness, racism, sexism, selfism, all the other isms, adultery, lust, greed and every other sin we've invented are not sins because they break some random moral code.
 - 3) These are sin because they break the law of love.
 - 4) We're not disregarding morality. We're elevating our definition of it.
 - 5) There are absolutes. There is a wrong and there is a right. But we cheapen wrong and right when we take them out of the context of love.
 - 6) God *defines* Love *defines* Obedience. When God COMMANDS you to OBEY, it is because He is COMPELLING you to LOVE.

(1 John 5:3b-5) "And His commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

g. And finally, the commands of God are not burdensome. Why? Back to **FAITH**

C. Third inseparable connection: **obedience** and **faith**

1. **There is no faithless obedience**
2. The longer you know God and the more you trust Him, the more His commands to love feel like freedom rather than restriction, the more obedience feels like "home."
3. Obeying God's commands to love are an experience of freedom to live in the new nature God has given you.
4. Not perfectly. Until we shed this sin-cursed body, obedience will never be 100% natural. But as you grow in faith and love, obeying won't be burdensome.

Action (put up "Faith, Love, Obedience, Faith" slide)

IV. Everything God said to us today boils down to this: Faith in Jesus, which leads to Love for God, which leads to Love for others which is lived out by Obedience to God's commands. We HAVE TO keep these bridges intact.

- A. I was going to give some specific application steps-how to personally grow in Faith Love and Obedience-but yesterday, God placed a caution in me about that.
1. This is all about relationship, not religious equations.
 2. There are things you need to do to grow in faith, love and obedience
- B. But I believe the CONTEXT of that growth is what God wants me to shine a light on today: RELATIONSHIP.
1. Relationally connecting with God every day through His Word and prayer.
 2. Being in community with other believers.
- C. Be honest with yourself. You will never grow in relationship with Jesus outside of a relational environment with His other sons and daughters.