



Taking Life's Most Important Test- 1 John

January 6, 2019

Introduction

For today we are doing an overview of the book of 1 John. Here are just some brief notes about the context of 1 John that help to understand the message: The book is authored by John (the disciple whom Jesus loved), who also wrote the gospel of John and Revelation. The book was written in Ephesus and sent to churches in Asia Minor (Turkey and surrounding areas). He wrote the book to attack false teaching (particularly the rise of Gnosticism- a mystic belief that rejected the material and focused only on the spirituality of individuals), also to reassure believers as the book contains what scholars say are not only the “tests of life” but also the “test of assurance” (ref 1 John 1:1-4; 5:13).

From your personal experience, what has been the most difficult test you have ever taken?

How did you prepare? Did you succeed on the first try or did it take multiple tries? How did it feel to know that you had succeeded in passing the tests?

Think about the tests that we have in our lives. As teenagers, we all couldn't wait until we had the opportunity to take our driver's test for our license. We prepared for that day by studying the book and we also had to take a driver's test to prove that we were proficient to operate a vehicle on the road. Later in high school, we would take the ACT to demonstrate that we were prepared for college. Today, in our adult lives we still may have tests that come up for certifications or proficiencies to demonstrate that we are capable for the work that we perform.

For the majority of believers, there have been times when we have questioned our salvation experience and evaluated its essence and authenticity. Through these moments, we can see how God's Word teaches us to overcome doubts and crush false assurances that so often hinder us from truly experiencing what God has promised for those that trust and follow Him. Paul called for believers in 2 Corinthians 13:5 to “examine themselves to see whether you are in the faith...” Therefore, we are going to ask four questions of our lives and see whether we “pass the test” or not.

The first question is:

1. Have I made a clear confession?

Have a volunteer to read 1 John 2:23.

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

John begins by explaining the effects in negative terms and then moves to positive ones, preparing the way for the exhortation that is to follow. John's claim that anyone who denies the Son does not have or possess the Father asserts unequivocally that a person who denies the Son has no child-parent relationship with God.¹ There is an exclusivity that cannot be denied. One enters into a relationship with the Father through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

The positive side of the argument is that the ones who confess the Son possess the Father, balancing perfectly the first part of the verse. The conscious and open confession that Jesus is Son of God who is both divine and human automatically results in a relationship with the Father. This mirrors the reciprocal relationship between the Son and the Father that was affirmed in v. 22. We are faced with either confessing or denying Jesus Christ. There is no middle ground.

Other Scriptures affirm the call for having a clear confession:

Matthew 10:32, **“So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven.”**

Romans 10:9, **“because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”**

What does it mean to have a clear confession?

A clear confession is to have a clear understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ and to have a time in your life when you placed your faith in the grace and mercy offered in a personal relationship with Him. A clear confession is not about a tradition that you followed or a ritual that you went through or even just knowing about Jesus, rather it involves both the head and the heart. A clear confession involves saving faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Three principles of saving faith:

- Saving faith is trusting Christ and Christ alone for your salvation.
- Faith us putting your trust where God put your sin (on the work of Christ on the cross).

¹ Akin, D. L. (2001). [1, 2, 3 John](#) (Vol. 38, p. 122). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

- Grace is God's hand reaching down from heaven, and faith is our hand reaching up to heaven.

In his sermon, Pastor Brady mentions how to place an emphasis in our salvation only upon faith becomes self-centered and can lead to doubts, where our true focus is to be on God's grace and mercy, and we trust in its power for salvation. From your personal experience, what have been misconceptions about confessing Christ? Why is there no middle ground in following Jesus? Why do we often struggle in our confession of Christ?

What have you heard from these verses that has caused you to think about your confession of Christ? How have these verses reaffirmed your confession? How have they challenged your confession of Christ?

Transition: Not only do we see that the first test involves passing the test of having a clear confession, but next we see that passing the test of life involves us asking:

2. Are we growing in obedience?

Have a volunteer to read 1 John 2:3-6.

- 3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.**
- 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;**
- 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:**
- 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.**

Have a volunteer to read 1 John 3:3-6.

- 3 And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**
- 4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.**
- 5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.**
- 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or ^bknows Him.**

What were some common statements that you heard in both passages? What do these commonalities emphasize? (Obedience to God's Word)

Why is obedience an indicator of spiritual growth?

The perception can be that if we obey then we are saved. The principle for us though is that good works are not a condition of salvation but a consequence of salvation. In other

words, we do not obey God's commands in order to be saved, rather we obey them because we are saved! Then as we grow in obeying God's Word we start to see our hearts and lives transformed. The change we experience is from purifying ourselves of the sin in our lives and following God's commands no matter the cost.

When you look at your life over the past year, what has been a way that you have obeyed God's Word even when it cost you something? What have been some victories that you have personally experienced by following God's commands? How have you grown in obeying God's Word over the past year? How does this motivate you to keep pushing forward in following Christ?

Transition: There is another area that we are called to grow in from 1 John and it involves not just our obedience and spiritual growth but also:

3. Am I growing in my love for others?

Have a volunteer to read 1 John 2:9, 3:14-15, 4:19-21.

1 John 2:9,

The one who says he is in the Light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

1 John 3:14-15,

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

1 John 4:19-21,

We love, because He first loved us. If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

In these verses we see a distinction between those that hate their brothers and those that love them. As a follower of Jesus Christ, one of the evidences that you are going to show in your life is a love for others. Those that are near to us and those that are far from us. Consider Jesus' own words in John 13:34-35.

When we consider the word "others" we often try to define the word to be those just like us or surrounding us every day. The reality is that anyone is an "other" and we are called

to show love to those that may be far from us just as much as the ones that are closest to us.

Pastor Brady mentioned how this love that we will have for others will be demonstrated in growing compassion, patience, forgiveness, and the removal of prejudice from our lives. The call therefore is for us to focus on what unites us rather than what can divide us. An example that is mentioned is how we should unite around the cross that unites us to God and gives us the mission going forward (Matthew 28:18-20).

What have been some areas in your life that you have allowed to become obstacles to growing in your compassion? What is a way this week that you can begin to tear down those obstacles and start to grow in Christ and unite with others?

What does it mean for us to be a diverse church? Why is this a reflection of what heaven will be like? What would have to change in our lives for us to become more diverse in the church?

Transition: Finally, we are going to see the final test to pass that helps us to know how we are going in the test of life:

4. Are you aware of the Spirit alive in you?

Have a volunteer to read 1 John 3:24, 4:13.

1 John 3:24

The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

1 John 4:13

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

Look at how the word “abide” is used in both of these verses. Jesus called his disciples to “abide” in Him in John 15:1-5. This abiding occurs through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The promise that we have from Scripture is that when we place our faith in Christ, we receive the presence of God through the Holy Spirit that comes to abide in our hearts. This means that the Holy Spirit helps and guides us in our thoughts and actions. The recognition of God’s presence in your life through the Holy Spirit is both comforting in our times of struggles and doubts as well as convicting when we practice sin. Therefore, when we get “off track” and sin, it is the Holy Spirit that convicts us of our sin and helps us to repent and be restored to Christ in our fellowship with Him.

How does it help you to know that God’s presence is with you at all times? How can that help us not to sin? What does it mean that His presence is with us, even when we sin?

In your personal experience, when have you experienced the conviction of the Holy Spirit? How did you respond? What changed in your life to help you move forward?

Application

- Go back over the four questions. Take a moment to reflect in your life for each one individually.
 - Have you had a time when you responded to God's grace and mercy and placed your faith through a clear confession?
 - Am I growing in obedience, where people see Christ more in my life today than this time last year?
 - Am I growing in love for others by how I am sharing the gospel and showing compassion to others?
 - Am I aware of the Holy Spirit's abiding presence in my life in times of comfort and in times of conviction?
 - For adults that may be dealing with people that experience doubts, these are great questions to review and lead them through in their personal experiences.
- Spend some time in reflection preparing for the new year and consider how vital it is to have our understanding of salvation nailed down before moving to other areas of our lives.
- Pray as a group for the confession, spiritual growth, love, and abiding presence of God to be in every member.