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TRINITY
by Paris Reidhead

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Summary: 1 John provides a test for eternal life and emphasizes the importance of repentance, fellowship, and walking in the light.

Duration: 35:01 Topics: "Trinity"

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DESCRIPTION

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In this sermon, the preacher begins by praying for the congregation to be filled with anticipation and for their hearts and lives to be conformed to God. The preacher emphasizes the importance of being equipped with knowledge of the scripture so that when people come seeking help, they can guide them to the word of God. The purpose of the letter being discussed is to bring joy and fellowship among believers, but it must be rooted in the Lord and the study of His word. The preacher also highlights the importance of understanding the concept of the new birth and how many people lack experiential knowledge of it. The sermon concludes by referencing the Gospel of John and its purpose of leading people to believe in Jesus for eternal life.

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CONTENT

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We're going to be in First John for several weeks, and I would like to suggest that we approach it on this basis, at least for the time being.
On Monday, you read the first chapter, and Tuesday the second, and so on through Friday. And then on Saturday and Sunday, read the entire epistle as a letter, just the way you'd read a letter from a friend.

And try to do it each week in a different version, if you have versions

in the home, or you can trade them and use them. But we're going to be thinking about it, studying it, verse by verse, because it's extremely important. It's one of the most important letters that we have in the Bible.

I'll show you that, I believe, today. Now, in the Gospel of John, chapter 20, verse 31, it says, These things are written, that you might believe, and that in believing, you might have eternal life. That's the purpose of the Gospel, that we might have eternal life.

But this little letter has a different purpose. These things are written, that you might know that you have eternal life. You have to understand the time in which the letter's written.

The earliest that they could have been written, John's Gospel was first, would have been about 85 A.D. Now, according to our calendar, and the one that would have that 85, our Lord was born in what we would call, because of an error in calculation, in 4 B.C., which would have meant that he died and descended into heaven in 29 or early 30 A.D. So, we're now talking about 55 years since the Lord left. John is the last of the apostles. All the others have died martyrs' deaths.

John, as you know, was martyred. He was sentenced to die by courts of Rome, by means of being boiled in oil. A large cauldron was heated with oil, large enough to submerge him, and he was placed in it, according to tradition and the records that we have in the church.

But the Lord was with him in the same way he was with the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, and when he came out, he had not been hurt. According to Roman law, he could not punish a person twice for the same crime. And so, he had paid the price.

It had not been effective, but he was exonerated. They did nothing further to it. That didn't mean that they liked him, so they exiled him to the island of Patmos in Ephesus.

And we are presuming that it is in Ephesus. I used to think it was in Patmos, but according to the records, it does seem as though in his last years he was in Ephesus. And it would have been there that he wrote the

Gospel of John, and from that same city, in that same city, that he penned this letter.

Now, there were problems throughout. Problems that faced the church. You read the epistle of Paul to the Colossians, and you will discover that there were certain heresies that had come into Asia Minor, and especially to the church at Colossae, where the Gnostics were, the dualists were.

These are words we need to understand. Gnostic is from the Greek word gnosis, which means knowledge. And that's all it is.

They had a higher knowledge, a more intellectual knowledge. They were the knowers as against the believers, the Gnostics. And then the dualists, who were also Gnostics, most all Gnostics were dualists, but the dualists came down from Plato.

Oh, let's just take a little quick picture of Plato. Long before the time of Christ, in ancient Athens, there were some very, very brilliant men. In particular, remember Socrates.

And Socrates was the one who gave us that great adage and instruction, know thyself. Socratic wisdom. Ask all the questions and verify the answers.

Many other things, a great oversimplification, but still, Socrates was a man of years and Plato was a boy of eight or nine. It's astonishing to me that a boy of eight or nine, when Socrates was killed, can remember verbatim all the conversations that took place at the death of Socrates, but that's a problem of Plato, not mine or Socrates' problem. At any rate, Plato went down to Sicily in the course of his maturing and his education, and though he doesn't tell us about it, there is record that Plato went from Sicily to Alexandria in Egypt.

And there in Alexandria, he spent several years studying with the Jews who were there. There was a great Alexandria library and there were all the rabbis that had been in the earlier dispersion and who gave him the knowledge of Mosaic thinking from the Torah. Now, never once does Plato mention Moses or the Torah or the Bible, never mentions it.

But he takes a lot of ideas from it, as he wanted to, but in addition to

the Jews being in Alexandria, there were a great many from India there, the fatihs, the teachers, from India. Now, the Indian teachers had then, as they do now, the same basic insight. Well, one of them was reincarnation, that you are born many, many times coming back in a higher or lower form of life depending on your conduct in the most recent incarnation.

But they also had another idea that no one has successfully traced the origin of it. But the idea was this, that all matter is evil and only spirit is good. Now, the Indians had clever ways of demonstrating this.

For instance, one of the ways they had to prove that matter didn't matter was to make a bed of coals, glowing, burning coals, and then walk across it, barefooted, saying that when the spirit is in control, flesh means nothing and they weren't burned. Or they would lie on a bed of spikes. Or they would measure the continent lying down.

Anything for the abnegation, the denigration of the flesh. Because their philosophy was matter is evil and only spirit is good, so it doesn't make any difference what the body does or what you do to the body, because it's the spirit that counts. Now, Plato absorbed that in Egypt along with the Mosaic teachings.

And then he came back to Athens claiming that he had some special revelations that had come to him. And he invented a new philosophy and he called the creator or urge, and he called Satan Demiurge, and he said that urge was spirit. Urge would be equivalent to God and that God had made man originally pure spirit, but when man sinned, then Demiurge, or Satan, put him in a body, imprisoned him in a body, and if the body is evil, then all matter is bad, only spirit is good.

Now do you see the kind of a philosophy that's coming in with all the prestige of Greece? And it's permeating and it's going down through the centuries with one school after another, one teacher after another. Before the time of Christ, you have the Essenes who had gone out, established communities, celibate communities, because the body was evil and all sexual relationships were evil, and this was the manner of abnegating the flesh. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ is born of a virgin, well, supernaturally conceived by the Holy Ghost, God come in the flesh,

and the whole of the revelation here, John said, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, all things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made that was made.

What is he striking at right there? He's striking at the philosophy that had been in Egypt, that had said that all matter was created by Satan or by Demiurge, and that God had only made spirit. So in the first words of his gospel, John is dealing with the problem. Remember, it's written about 85 A.D., and these issues have come into the fore.

So what do you have? You have the Gnostics coming on that take Christian words in Christian terms and fit the philosophy of dualism to it. And one of the things that came out of this was antinomianism, anti, against, nomos, the law, and antinomianism said, since it was the body that made man sin, and sin was resident in flesh, God saved the spirit, and it didn't make any difference what the flesh did, because God got glory when He forgave sin, and therefore the more sin you committed, the more glory God got. And this is the thing that was called antinomianism, and it was condemned by Paul in the sixth chapter of Romans when he said, What then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Antinomianism was the contribution of the Gnostics, and in addition to that, they also professed to be loyal to the Scripture, but they said the Scripture is not inspired of God, it's not to be taken literally, either morally or historically.

There's a much higher source of knowledge for man, there's a much higher revelation than the Scripture, and that's this knowledge, this gnosis, this revelation that we're getting. And Gnosticism cut at the root of all Biblical truth, all Biblical morality, did away with repentance. How could a person repent when sin was caused by flesh? Flesh couldn't repent, only the spirit, but since it was the body that made man sin, man didn't need to repent.

No repentance was necessary at all, no necessity for blood atonement, according to the Gnostics, because since it was the body that did it, why? And there would be no incarnation, because since Demiurge had made flesh, and flesh was evil, God would never sully himself by becoming incarnate in human flesh. And so these are the heresies that have crept

into the Church before the turn of the first century, before you've gone into past that first century when Christ was born. And John, the last of the Apostles, recognizing what was being done, was used of God to strike at this.

And he was using the Gospel of John as his first effort, and then he was using this letter as the second. Notice now, in I John 1, that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life. For the life was manifested, we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifest unto us.

That which we have seen and heard we declare unto you that you also may have fellowship with us. The life, the life, that's the word that he is emphasizing here, the word of life. In the beginning was the word, said he in the first verses of his Gospel.

And the word was with God, and the word was God, and all things were made by Him. Now he is speaking of the life, or the word of life. And he tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the life, was eternally existent, that which was from the beginning.

And that there had come a point when He was manifest in time. The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and heard it, and have looked upon it, and our hands have handled, we've touched Him, the Lord Jesus Christ. I've lived and walked and talked and eaten with Him.

And I know whereof I speak, says John. I have personally verified that God came in the flesh, that Jesus Christ is the eternal word, He is the life, and that He is therefore by me authoritatively declared to be God come in the flesh. Because the heresy said Jesus Christ didn't have a human body.

He was only spirit. Because He could never become incarnate in the human body. He couldn't sully Himself to touch flesh.

So what He seemed to have as a body wasn't really a body. He was just a theophany, just a manifestation, just something that you imagined you saw. That was what the heresy of the Gnostics was.

But John said, now wait a minute, I want you to know that He is the life, and He was manifest in time, and we've walked with Him, and we've talked with Him, we've eaten the same food, and He had a body like unto our body. He was God come in the flesh, very God of very God, but very man of very man. And so He announces this as a stroke that He will use a sword that He wields to deal with this terrible heresy of Gnosticism.

Now, what had been the result? The result of Gnosticism had been that prior in that time from the time Paul died until the time of John, a lot of people had identified with Christ, who had no Biblical evidence of being children of God. Now I want you to take a trip with me, a bus trip, Greyhound of Asia Minor, special tour tickets, and we're getting on somewhere down around Damascus or Antioch, and we're going to drive up around and we're going to come into Ephesus. And the whole purpose is we are the old timers.

We remember when Paul was here. We are in Peter preaching. Paul preached.

We've been in the churches and we've gathered. It's kind of a reunion. John is now in his late years.

He's 90-some years of age. And we want to go see him. So there's a group of us that gather and we fill the bus and we're driving up into Ephesus in what is now Turkey.

And we meet John. We visit with him for a little while. And we're sitting there one day in the cool of the evening in the shade of the wall and the trees in the garden.

One of us says, Father John, we're troubled. We're so troubled. There's a lot of people coming into the churches today that claim to be Christian.

They claim to be followers of Christ. But they're so different. There's

no hatred of sin.

There's no love of holiness. There's no hunger for God. They walk just like the people that don't claim to be Christian.

They can't tell the difference between the church and the world. It's just mixed up to the point where nothing makes any sense anymore.

John,

please, has God given another revelation? Has there been something new?

You walked with the Lord.

You talked with Him. Now John, you're going to be gone a little while. Now we've all been comforted by the fact you've been here and you've walked with the Lord, but He's going to take you.

We're going to be left. Won't you write to us, John, a letter and tell us who is a believer? We've got to know. Otherwise, we're going to see the church become just like the world and there won't be any difference.

What's the use of suffering for Christ if the whole thing is going to go down and just sort of rust away? We've got to know. We've got to know. And the rest of you around say, Amen, brother.

We've got to know. Write to us, John, and put it in a letter so that long after you're gone, we'll be able to read that letter and know who is. Now that's going to do several things for us, John.

That's going to help us to know ourselves, whether we're right. But we really want to know the worst about ourselves while there's still time enough to do something about it. We'd hate to be among that number Christ talked about when He said, Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, and I'll say away with you, I never knew you.

So we want to flee from the wrath that come and we want to make absolutely certain about ourselves. But, John, we're still elders in local churches and we want to know when people come to us just what the biblical evidence is so we can help them and we won't be filling the churches with the unconverted that learn to say a few words but really don't know anything about the Lord. Will you write us that letter, John?

And then, of course, if the church is what it ought to be and we're what we ought to be, we're going to have fellowship one with another.

We're going to have fellowship with the Lord and our joy is going to be

full. Oh, so important. And so John says to them, Yes, I'll write you that letter.

Nothing has changed. God hasn't put a different standard down than the one He started with. Everything the Lord Jesus said still is in effect.

But I'll put it in the letter so you'll have it. And so these that are going around trying to corrupt the church claiming they got a higher revelation and they got intelligence the rest of us don't have will be exposed. I'll write you a letter and you'll have it.

And the purpose of that letter is that you'll have the evidences of eternal life so that your joy can be full, that you can have fellowship with others who know the Lord and that together your corporate joy will be full. Now, don't you think there's a need for a letter like that in John's time? Well, I wonder if there isn't a need for a letter like that in our time. I wonder if there hasn't been a great loss to the church because we've forgotten that though Gnosticism isn't a common word it still appears in such forms as liberalism.

Oh, I could give you some other terms closer to home that give a higher revelation. I grew up in a teaching of dispensationalism. And dispensationalism was supposed to have been a revelation from God to John M. Darby and Mr. Kelly and Mr. Grant of England in Plymouth.

The only thing is they found a manuscript written by a Jesuit priest in Spain and they plagiarized this the way Plato plagiarized the Jews and the Indians. But I can recall being told you don't need to repent. Repentance is Jewish! Not for today.

Anybody who ever says Jesus is Lord is going to go to heaven. I can remember one of our preachers near me an associate in the same district same fellowship saying over and over again Sunday nights you'd think he had some business he was running. Anybody that's been saved can die in the arms of a harlot and go straight to heaven over and over and over again.

I kind of wonder what he was doing. Was he running a business on the side or something? Because here he is, a preacher and he is preaching antinomianism as though it were the dark... Essentially he was saying the more you sin, the more God forgives and the more God forgives, the more grace that he shows and more glory it gets because he's gracious.

It was a horrible travesty of Scripture.

Why the Scripture is so different. Listen to what it says. The Lord knoweth them that are hidden but let everyone that came in the name of Christ depart.

We're going to see as we go through 1 John what the biblical evidences of being of eternal life are. That's why I want you to read it. What are they? Oh, that's why the Apostle Paul was so concerned when he wrote to the church in Corinth where these Gnostic ideas had gotten in and sin had come into the church and he condemned it so.

And then he said, but you cleared yourself as I've come to you with the truth. You've heard it, you've repented, you've dealt with these things. But in his second letter in chapter 13 in verse 5 he said, Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith.

Prove your own self. Know you not your own selves how that Christ be in you except you be reprobate. Down in Chattanooga, Tennessee when we were living there one of my friends had a radio program.

And a man called him in the middle of the week and said, Brother Don, you know me. You know my name. We've met a time or two.

Don't know me well, but I go to such and such a church and I'm one of the personal workers that's at the front with the clipboard when people come forward at the invitation on Sunday mornings. He said, I listened to you talk on the radio and I got upset. Last Sunday, a gentleman came.

I'd never seen him before. And I asked him what he came for and he said he came to be saved from sin. I asked him if he knew he was a sinner and he said, Man, I just told you I came to be saved from sin.

Of course I know I'm a sinner. So I gave him that verse of Scripture that says, He that hath the Son hath life. And I said, Do you believe that? He said, Yes, I do.

And so I got his name and address and I checked the place where it said saved and then I asked him if he had any questions and he said, One

question. You asked me if I believe that he that hath the Son hath life
and I said, Yes. But the question is this.

How do you get the Son? I believe if you have the Son, you have life.
But how do you get the Son? And I told him, Oh, you don't need to worry
about that. The important thing is you believe the verse.

And so he went up on my urging and he was baptized. But I wonder if I
did right. I wonder if there isn't a little more to it than just
believing that the verse is true.

Oh, friends today. R.G. Lee, pastor of the great Bellevue Baptist
Church
in Memphis, Tennessee in South Carolina, the Spartan Bird speaking to
the South Carolina Southern Baptist Convention said, Gentlemen, based
on
40 years close observation, I am convinced that no more than one out
of
ten of our people know anything experientially about the new birth.
And
the preacher said, Gentlemen, if I am in error, the error is I put it
too high, probably far less than one out of ten.

Know anything about the new birth experience. I'm not here to prove
Dr.
Lee right or wrong. That's not my purpose.

The only thing I'm here to do is to give you the opportunity of being
equipped when people come to you. You won't have to pat them on the
shoulder and say, Everything's all right with you, dear, because
you're
my friend and we go to the same church or something else. But you'll
be
able to take them to the scripture verse by verse and let the word of
God speak to their hearts.

That's what I want to see happen. Why? That our joy may be full. That
we
may have fellowship one with another and with the other.

That's the purpose of the letter. Joy. Fellowship.

But it has to be joy in the Lord and fellowship with the Lord in the
world. Father, let us pray. Heavenly Father, breathe thou upon us as a
people.

We come now to this most important of epistles. Oh, that thou wilt
illumine our minds. And this may become one of the most exciting

periods
in our Christian life and study.

As we look together at the word, week by week, and until we come to grips with the answer to the problem of John's day and our day, and so many there are that have a name to live but are dead, and one day will find that they thought they were of the household of faith and only to discover they were of the synagogue of Satan. So, Lord, let us serve our generation wisely and courageously and lovingly and well, that we might be the means of bringing joy to the heart of the Lord Jesus as he sees men and women, boys and girls, brought out of death into life, walking in the truth of thy word. So, Father, to that end, bless us as a people and as we prepare our hearts for a coming Lord's day, putting anticipation and excitement that we might meet together to find out what it is the Spirit of God is saying to the church today as he did then.

In Jesus' name, amen. The one who has made all things our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Hymn number 48.

Let's see verses 1 and 2 of hymn number 48. Stand together as we sing hymn number 48. There is Lord Jesus, full of all nature, home of God and man, the Son.

Be where my cherished There are the meadows, there still the warm garb of spring. Jesus is nearer, Jesus is nearer, who makes the hopeful heart to sing. I pray, precious Heavenly Father, as we find our hearts and minds stimulated this morning and with anticipation of the days to come, if you tarry, to hear how you can help us to know beyond a... hearts and our lives are brought into conformity to you.

Bless us as we're scattered, as we have opportunity to share tonight. I pray that that will be. And true, truly Heavenly Father, have your hand upon us for good, as we desire the sincere milk of the Word.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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