

1 John: Full Scale Faith

The Johannine Epistles: Balancing Life in Christ — Session 7

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Faith, Obedience, Love, Incarnation, Antichrist, Assurance, Holy Spirit, Propitiation, Fellowship

Abstract

In Session 7 of his series on the Johannine Epistles, Dr. Robert Yarbrough examines 1 John 3:9–4:14, highlighting the balance of faith, obedience, and love in the Christian life. He details John's central warning against the spirit of division and false prophets, urging believers to test the spirits by confessing Jesus Christ come in the flesh. Dr. Yarbrough then explores the foundational imperative of God's sacrificial love, showing how true Christian love is an active verb rather than a passive sentiment. Ultimately, assurance of salvation rests in God's unchanging character, the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, and active love within the community.

Outline

I. Section 4: Central Warning (1 John 3:9–4:6)

- A. A Summons to Love (3:9–18)
 - 1. Distinction between children of God and children of the devil (3:9–10)
 - 2. Negative example: Cain's hatred and murder of his brother (3:11–12)
 - 3. Love as an active verb: laying down life and sharing material goods (3:13–18)
- B. Confirmation of Love and Assurance (3:19–24)
 - 1. Reassuring our hearts when condemned: God is greater than our hearts (3:19–20)
 - 2. Confidence before God and receiving answers to prayer (3:21–22)
 - 3. Core commandment: believing in Christ and loving one another (3:23)
 - 4. Abiding in God through the Holy Spirit (3:24)
- C. Summons to Choose and Test the Spirits (4:1–3)
 - 1. Discernment against false prophets and the spirit of Antichrist (4:1)
 - 2. Criterion for truth: confessing Jesus Christ came in the flesh (4:2–3)
 - 3. Historic and modern shifts away from apostolic Christology (4:3)
- D. Confirmation of Victory and Discernment (4:4–6)
 - 1. Believers have overcome because He who is in them is greater (4:4)
 - 2. Worldly voices listen to the world; church division occurs when world replaces Word (4:5)
 - 3. The apostolic witness as the standard for the Spirit of truth vs. error (4:6)

II. Section 5: Foundational Imperative (1 John 4:7–14)

A. The First Exhortation to Love (4:7–10)

1. Love originates from God; to know God is to exude and exercise love (4:7–8)
2. Clarification: God is love, but love is not a substitute for God (4:8)
3. Manifestation of divine love: God sending His Son as propitiation for our sins (4:9–10)

B. The Second Exhortation to Love (4:11–14)

1. Divine love catalyzes mutual Christian love in community (4:11)
2. God's love is perfected (completed in effect) through small, practical gestures (4:12)
3. Assurance of abiding through the Spirit and the apostolic testimony of Christ as Savior (4:13–14)