

1 John, Full-Scale Faith

The Johannine Epistles: Balancing Life in Christ — Session 8

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Abstract

In this final session on 1 John, Dr. Robert Yarbrough examines the structural sections of 1 John 4:15–5:21 following ancient Byzantine church text divisions. He articulates the concept of a 'full-scale faith' that harmonizes true doctrinal confession of Jesus Christ, moral obedience to God's commandments, and the active experience of divine love. The lecture distinguishes between personal subjective faith (fides qua creditur) and the objective content of faith (fides quae creditur), while providing pastoral counsel on discerning sin leading to death. Ultimately, Yarbrough urges believers to maintain vigilance against spiritual counterfeits and modern mental idols, grounding their assurance in the eternal life given through the Son of God.

Outline

I. Introduction and Structural Framework

- A. Overview of 1 John as 'Full-Scale Faith' (or Full-Package Faith)
 - 1. Harmony of faith, obedience/works, and God's love in the believer's life
 - 2. Faith transforming personal devotion from self-centeredness to God's kingdom and guidance
- B. Textual Structure based on Byzantine Church Manuscript Divisions
 - 1. Departure from modern 5-chapter divisions in favor of 1,000-year-old liturgical divisions
 - 2. Focus on two final sections: Section 6 (Necessary Instruction) and Section 7 (Concluding Admonition)

II. Section 6: Necessary Instruction — Believing in Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1 John 4:15–5:15)

- A. Invitation/Declaration and Warrant (1 John 4:15–16)
 - 1. Confession of Jesus as the Son of God as the doorway to God abiding in the believer
 - 2. Confirmation of faith through abiding in God's love
- B. Commendation of Love (1 John 4:17–21)
 - 1. Expression of love as a defense casting out the fear of judgment

- 2. Human love for God growing out of God's prior initiative and love for humanity
- 3. Inseparable link between loving God and loving fellow believers
- C. Commendation of Personal Faith: Fides Qua Creditur (1 John 5:1–5)
 - 1. Faith defined as an active verb ('faithing') flowing from regeneration
 - 2. Active faith yielding joyful obedience to God's non-burdensome commandments
 - 3. Faith in Christ as the means of overcoming the world
- D. Commendation of Objective Content of Faith: Fides Quae Creditur (1 John 5:6–12)
 - 1. The historic foundation of Christ coming by 'water and blood' (baptism and crucifixion)
 - 2. The threefold testimony of the Spirit, the water, and the blood
 - 3. The internal witness of God's testimony yielding eternal life in the Son
- E. Conclusion and Purpose of Necessary Instruction (1 John 5:13–15)
 - 1. Assurance of eternal life for those who believe in the name of the Son of God
 - 2. Confidence in prayer according to God's divine will

III. Section 7: Concluding Admonition — The True God and the Threat of Impostors (1 John 5:16–21)

- A. Pastoral Counsel Regarding Sin and Sinners (1 John 5:16–17)
 - 1. Intercession for brothers committing sin not leading to death
 - 2. Distinction regarding sin leading to death (terminal sin of persistent unbelief, apostasy, or blasphemy)
 - 3. Exercise of discerning love and proper spiritual boundaries
- B. The Tie That Binds: Three Core Affirmations of Christian Certainty (1 John 5:18–20)
 - 1. Affirmation 1: Regeneration protects the believer from persistent sin and the evil one
 - 2. Affirmation 2: Believers belong to God while the world lies in the power of the evil one
 - 3. Affirmation 3: The Son of God has come and granted true insight to know Him who is true
- C. Final Pastoral Appeal: Guarding Against Idols (1 John 5:21)
 - 1. Definition of idol (eidolon) as mental fantasies, unbiblical constructs, or spiritual counterfeits
 - 2. Warning against 'spirituality without religion' or inventing a counterfeit Christ
 - 3. Call to humble vigilance and steadfast reliance on God's grace as 'little children'