**1 John 4, 9/28/2018**

**Opening**

* Have you bought things from 淘宝网 or eBay? Are you confident that you bought the true stuff as opposed to fake stuff? How can you be sure?
  + Have you seen or heard people from Jehovah Witnesses or Mormons coming to you or your friends to preach their beliefs?
  + How can we tell what they preach is genuine or fake?
  + How can we identify false prophets and evil spirits?
* What kind of environments do you want to live in? Loving or fearing?
  + What is love? 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”
  + A little bit of fear or anxiety might not be too bad. It will keep us alert, respectful, and not boastful. However, too much fear is detrimental.
  + What do you fear the most?
* Do you remember what we discussed last Friday? Children of God and the forsaking of sin. Love One Another.
* Outline (ESV Study Bible)

1. Overcoming Antichrist by Confession of the Son ([2:18–3:10](https://www.esv.org/1+John+2%3A18-3%3A10/))
   1. Warning and assurance ([2:18–27](https://www.esv.org/1+John+2%3A18-27/))
   2. Christians as children of God ([2:28–3:3](https://www.esv.org/1+John+2%3A28-3%3A3/))
   3. Children of God and the forsaking of sin ([3:4–10](https://www.esv.org/1+John+3%3A4-10/))
2. Overcoming Evil by Listening to the Apostle ([3:11–4:6](https://www.esv.org/1+John+3%3A11-4%3A6/))
   1. Overcoming Cain’s malice ([3:11–24](https://www.esv.org/1+John+3%3A11-24/))
   2. Overcoming the Antichrist’s deception ([4:1–6](https://www.esv.org/1+John+4%3A1-6/))
3. The Assurance of God through the Love of God ([4:7–21](https://www.esv.org/1+John+4%3A7-21/))
   1. The perfecting of God’s love ([4:7–12](https://www.esv.org/1+John+4%3A7-12/))
   2. The assurance of God’s Spirit ([4:13–21](https://www.esv.org/1+John+4%3A13-21/))
4. Faith in the Son as the Way to Life ([5:1–12](https://www.esv.org/1+John+5%3A1-12/))
   1. Faith keeps the commandments of God ([5:1–5](https://www.esv.org/1+John+5%3A1-5/))
   2. Faith receives the testimony of God ([5:6–12](https://www.esv.org/1+John+5%3A6-12/))
5. Final Call to Faith and Understanding ([5:13–21](https://www.esv.org/1+John+5%3A13-21/))
   1. The confidence that faith furnishes ([5:13](https://www.esv.org/1+John+5%3A13/))
   2. The prayer that faith enables ([5:14–17](https://www.esv.org/1+John+5%3A14-17/))
   3. The understanding that faith grants ([5:18–21](https://www.esv.org/1+John+5%3A18-21/))

**Test the Spirits (4:1-6)**

* 1 John 4:1–6 Overcoming the Antichrist’s Deception. It is not only Cain’s bad precedent of lack of love that John fears for his readers; it is also the forces of spiritual deception. John furnishes a litmus test to detect them. ESV Study Bible.
* 1 John 4:1 Do not believe every spirit. Christian faith is not spiritual gullibility. Test the spirits. The unseen spiritual influences that guide people’s speech and actions can be “tested” by observing their doctrine and conduct as well as by the gift of spiritual discernment (cf. 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:29). False prophets are people who claim to speak for God but are actually speaking by demonic influence (1 John 4:3–4). In today’s age of “tolerance,” discriminating discernment can be viewed as being judgmental (cf. “Judge not,” Matt. 7:1). Yet Jesus also taught, “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment” (John 7:24). ESV Study Bible.
* 1 John 4:5 They are from the world … the world listens to them. Jesus himself did not convince most leaders of his time (John 7:48; Acts 4:26), and even the common people who followed him were often fickle (John 6:66). They speak from the world. Their speech originates from and is empowered by the world’s viewpoint and values. ESV Study Bible.
* Discussion
  + Are antichrists already in the world?
  + Verse 2. “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.” Why? Why is “Jesus has come in the flesh” so important?
  + Have you heard the “Apostles’ Creed”? “I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.”

**God Is Love (4:7-21)**

* 1 John 4:7–12 The Perfecting of God’s Love. The closing words of this section, “his love is perfected in us” (v. 12), capture the direction of John’s claims and exhortation. ESV Study Bible.
* 1 John 4:7 Whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. This does not rule out the need for faithful confession of Christ (2:23; 4:2) and ethical integrity (3:16). But love completes the picture of a life in fellowship with God. Love is presented here as a consequence of, not a precondition for, being born of God. Unbelievers can love others to some degree, but not in the way that God’s indwelling presence enables Christians to love (cf. 4:8–11). ESV Study Bible.
* 1 John 4:9 God’s love is not an abstract principle or sentiment but was made manifest in the sending of his only Son into the world, so that sinful humanity might live, i.e., receive eternal life. ESV Study Bible.
* 1 John 4:13–21 The Assurance of God’s Spirit. God’s Spirit (v. 13) gives impetus for and assurance in the high calling of mutual love. ESV Study Bible.
* 1 John 4:14 we have seen and testify. This was particularly and uniquely true for apostles like John, who were Jesus’ hand-picked witnesses. By extension and through faith, all subsequent believers testify to the same truths. ESV Study Bible.
* 1 John 4:17 By this refers to the previous verse, where John speaks of believers abiding in God and God abiding in them. Confidence for the day of judgment. Either eternal life or eternal punishment awaits all humanity (see John 3:36), and God’s love furnishes a sure hope for those who have trusted in him. As he is so also are we in this world. Just as the Son was and is present in the world in a loving fashion that in no way attracted divine displeasure, so are the Son’s followers. The love that Christ embodied and lived out among believers is their confidence in the day of judgment. ESV Study Bible.
* 1 John 4:18 No fear in love does not rule out the presence and constructive effect of “the fear of the Lord” that is “the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). Here John speaks of fear of final judgment (cf. 1 John 4:17). God’s perfect love for believers casts out the fear of wrath and eternal punishment. ESV Study Bible.
  + Jesus had no fear on the cross. Rather, he overcame death.
* Discussion
  + Have you seen that the Father has sent his son to be the savior of the world? Can you testify on this? How? Please share your experience.

**Wrapping up**

* V. 20. ‘If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.’ Any resolutions?
* What are your favorite verses in this chapter?

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