

1 Jn. 5:18-21 (LD 8) “That We May Know Him Who Is True”

For the Children: I have sometimes heard people say that schools make students study a lot of things that are useless to know. They suggest that schools should concentrate on teaching children useful things. Perhaps those who think that way don't actually know how useful it is to know English, history, maths, chemistry (and even Latin!). The lessons some find terribly boring may later even save their lives! Some people think the same about studying the Bible and learning about the Trinity, and such truths. Yet knowing such things will save your life – eternally – if the Lord enables you to believe in Him from the heart. Questions: What do we mean by the “Trinity”? Why is this teaching so important? How can 1 + 1 + 1 = 1?

Introduction:

First Point: Statement of the Doctrine

- One God: The Scripture is clear that there is only one God (Dt. 6:4, 1 Cor. 8:4).
- Three Persons Fully That One God: However, the Scripture also makes it clear that the Father is fully that one God, as is the Son, as is the Holy Spirit. Hence the Christian faith has insisted that there is One God in 3 Persons and 3 Persons in one God. A “Person” in this sense is an individual centre of self-consciousness.
- The Begotten Son: The Bible speaks of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in terms that could only be used of God. In our text, Jesus is “*The* (Begotten) Son of God” – though believers are also “born again” of the Spirit, sons by adoption. Christ, however, is unique (“only-begotten”), having the same nature as God. See also Jn. 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; Heb. 1:5, 5:5; 1 Jn. 4:9. 1 Jn. 5:20 also indicates that He is still carrying out His will in the world, and that, as with God, He is the true and eternal One Who gives life. See also Mt. 14:33, Jn. 20:28, Phlp. 2:8-11, Col. 1:15-20, Titus 2:13, and Heb. 1:1-4.

Second Point: Statement of the Blessings from It

- Protection from Evil: In v. 19 John says that all the world lies under bondage to Satan and sin. The Lord Jesus is able to set us free from that and keep us safe. He is greater than Satan, and all other angels (Heb. 1-2). Only God could do that!
- The Gift of Life: He is also the Source, Origin and Giver of eternal life. Forgiveness of sins is associated with that – which only God can grant (Lk. 15:21, 24). Behind this lies the truth that the only One who can save us must be fully God as well as man – for His work to have the infinite value needed to save the “many.” See also LD 6.
- Understanding of the Truth: Who but God could know all God wishes to reveal to us, and make it known so that we actually understand and can enter a saving, personal relationship with God? See Jn. 15;15.
- No More Sinning in the Same Old Way: Christ has broken the power of sin as well as its guilt. He has given us His Word to call us to holiness, and His Spirit to enable us to make a start in it. Who else but God could so change a sinful human heart to enable such things as faith, repentance and sanctification?

Third Point: Statement of the Importance of It

- Creedal Statements: Both the Athanasian Creed and LD 7-8 make it clear that the doctrine of the Trinity *must* be believed if one wishes to be saved. It is so fundamental to the faith that the Apostles' Creed embraces all its articles in a Trinitarian structure. BCF 9 condemns the heretics who have rejected it.
- Vital Connections: 1 Jn. 5:20 makes it clear that one has to be “in Christ” to know the true God and to have eternal life. See also Jn. 14:6, 17:3. This is not surprising, because there is so much other essential doctrine connected to the Triune Nature of God – concerning our salvation, illumination, sanctification, and Christ's intercession for us.
- Guarding Ourselves from Idols: John warns against idols in v. 21. When false religions reject the Triune God of the Bible, or heretics twist the doctrine, they have turned to idols.

Conclusion: