

# So That You May Know

## An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John 5:6-8**

### Chapter 26- Understanding and Valuing the Doctrine of the Trinity

### 239 Our Triune God Part 11

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WAOY Friday-Monday 08/22-25/08

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1John**, and today we're going to continue to look at what John taught about "The Doctrine of the Trinity". So let's open our Bibles and read **1John 5:6-8**- again together:

**6 This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.**

**7 For there are three that testify:**

**8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.**

Now on the last broadcast- we were going over just how important it is for the Church to know and to rightly preach Who Jesus is. For almost five chapters- the Apostle John has been teaching us that there are four things that are essential to being a Christian:

1. Love of God and for God
2. Keeping God's Commandments
3. Loving the Brethren
4. A Correct Understanding of Who Jesus is

Now on the last broadcast- we were going over a time in Church History when the Christian Faith almost lost its understanding of Who Jesus is. This time is called the Arian Controversy and it involves a battle within the Church over the Deity of Jesus Christ.

Last time, we were talking about how that the Controversy surrounding the Deity of Christ nearly brought the Church to destruction back in the fourth century. Because the Church did not

have a written formal Doctrinal Statement concerning the Deity of Jesus Christ, the heretic Arius had been successful in bringing false teaching into the Church and of deceiving all of the leaders of the church- except one.

And we discussed how that the Roman Emperor, Constantine, had recently converted to Christianity and became very dismayed that his adopted Church was embroiled in a bitter controversy over Doctrine. Constantine, you may recall, had brought peace to the Christian Church. He had ended 300 years of persecution. The Church now had the opportunity to grow unhindered by outside oppression. And the Roman Emperor was utterly amazed that intelligent people were debating about one letter of one word.

The prevailing sentiment in the Church of that day was, *“Who cares whether Jesus was of the same Essence with the Father? Now is the time for the Church to prosper. Who cares whether Christ was Deity or not- what does that have to do with the Church gaining more members and having more influence than at any time in its history?”*

So the mood of the Church at that time reflected the mood of society in general. The biggest and most respected names in the Church in the fourth century were all unanimous about this one thing: Sound, Biblical Doctrine really didn't matter. And for anyone in the Church to argue about the Deity of Jesus Christ at a time when the Church had been set free from outside oppression was, to the leaders of the Church, ridiculous. So, they didn't argue about it. But the only result of that was heresy and false teaching ran right into the Church and the Divinity of Jesus Christ was nearly lost.

Back then very few pastors, elders, or bishops- in fact almost no one- thought that inspired Truth was valuable enough to defend. The average person in the Church was so happy about not being persecuted anymore that they had no heart to stand on God's Word about anything. In fact, many of that day wrote that it was the few who *did* stand up to defend God's Word against evil men that were the ones who were wrong. For example- Eusebius, the great Church historian- wrote that Faith in Christ was all that mattered- and so Who Christ is really didn't matter.

Now when you read about this gigantic struggle that the Church went through in the fourth century- it reminds you of the condition of the Church in our day. Many in the modern Church use the very same

logic that people had back in the fourth century about Divine Truth- that it really isn't necessary and in some cases it is a real problem. And that scares me to death.

You have to understand that the leaders of the Church in the fourth century saw their day as a time when Christianity would experience unprecedented growth and influence- if only they could just get rid of those pesky people who wanted to make sure that what the Church believed and taught was true. Little did they know that the greatest battle that the Church had ever faced was just ahead. In fact, the damage that the Arian heresy did to the Church was far greater than the damage that all the persecutions over a three hundred year time frame had done.

You see, dear friends, history proves to us that most *external* persecution has the net effect of causing the people of the Church to actually grow stronger as they rally around the Truth. God's people actually grow stronger about Gods' Word when they are being persecuted. But heresy and false teaching is insidious because it comes from *within* the ranks of the Church and it divides and ruins the love and sweetness and purity of the Church.

So the majority of those in the Church in the beginning of the fourth century didn't view Alexander's attempt to rebuke Arius' false teaching on the Deity of Christ as either a noble or a necessary thing to preserve the purity of the Gospel. No, the majority of those in the Church at that time viewed Alexander's attempts at excommunicating the heretic, Arius as an unnecessary and unwelcomed attempt at destroying Christian unity and of diminishing the potential that the Church had to grow and prosper.

So Alexander, the godly bishop, was looked on by the majority as being cruel, harsh, unloving, mean spirited, and unchristian for trying to uphold the Biblical Doctrine of the Deity of Jesus Christ, while Arius, the heretic, was looked on with great sympathy- as some type of noble and valiant soul who was being unnecessarily persecuted by a mean and cruel man for simply having a different opinion about something that really didn't matter anyway.

So when Alexander excommunicated Arius for being an unrepentant heretic who had blasphemed the Deity of Jesus Christ- Alexander was viewed as the bad guy and Arius was viewed as the hero.

So Eusebius, the historian, wrote that the Church should allow Alexander to teach whatever he wanted to about Christ's Deity and the Church should at the same time allow Arius to teach whatever he wanted and the people of the Church should be able to just choose which version of the Divinity of Christ best suited them. And that approach is what is called "presenting both sides" or "being fair and balanced".

But we need to remember, beloved, that while the goal of News Programs may be to allow all sides of an issue to voice their opinions- the goal of the Church is to remain faithful to Scripture- to the *exclusion* of other opinions. The Church is not about being "fair and balanced". The Church is about holding fast to what God has revealed in the Bible. We have to understand, dear friends, that every point of view about a particular issue is not equally valuable. There is Divine Truth and then there is Man's opinion. And Divine Truth is found only in Scripture- not in somebody's imagination. So the Christian Church should never give credibility to a lie- no matter how many people may believe in it.

You see, there is Right and then there is Wrong. There are what are called "moral absolutes"- things that are true and right and that are always true and always right and that are binding upon every human on earth. And so God's Word never seeks approval by people. It never seeks to arrive at a consensus. It isn't concerned with popularity. God never asked for our opinion about what to put in the Bible and God never sought our counsel when He created the universe or when He established Truth. So Truth is what God says that it is and Sin is what God determined sin to be.

And the duty of the Church in general and the duty of Christians in particular is not to debate with God about what is right and wrong- that has already been established by the Almighty. The duty of the Church and of Christians is to teach what God has said; and to teach it rightly; fully; and without apology; and without being ashamed of it.

And we are to teach it if everybody agrees with it and it brings us much joy and much acclaim and we are to teach it if nobody likes it and if nobody agrees with it and it brings us much persecution and much sadness.

Because Divine Truth is not something that changes over time. Truth is not something that is affected in the least by any man or by society or by societal changes.

And Biblical morality is not something that originates in the heart and mind of human beings. True morality; true Biblical Morality is always *imposed* upon human beings by an Almighty and Sovereign God Who says, “*This is the way that it is!*” So the Ten Commandments are called “Commandments” precisely because they are not ten Suggestions on how to live a better life and more fulfilled life. God didn’t say, “*Here are ten tips on better living*”. No, God said, “*Obey these ten things or die!*”

So the goal of the Christian Church is to first *know* the Truth; and then secondly, to *teach and proclaim* that Truth; and thirdly to *obey* that Truth; then lastly to *defend* the Truth against anyone or anything that tries to change it. So to compromise Divine Truth in order to get along with people only proves that we are ashamed of what God has said and it shows that we really don’t value what God said enough to defend it against the naysayers.

Now while it is true that believers are to be kind and generous and meek and humble and not quarrelsome about unimportant personal preferences- it is also true that we are to be solid, strong, rigid, inflexible, and unmovable when it comes to Divine Truth. And so we are *not* to entertain all points of view when it comes to eternal matters that have already been revealed in Scripture.

Listen it isn’t a Christian virtue to drop or to cast aside what the Bible declares to be true in order to accept what some heretic teaches so that the heretic won’t feel offended. It is cowardice. It isn’t being humble to be confused about what you believe and why you believe it- it is simply being confused. What is a Christian virtue is to stand on the Truth and endeavor to persuade the heretic of the error of his way.

Beloved, when the Church loses its bearings; when the House of God leaves off Truth- the whole ball game goes down the drain quick. Because when the leaders of the Church are confused about right and wrong- the people have no hope. When the Church is no longer the light of the world; when the Church is no longer the city set on a hill; when the Church is no longer the pillar and ground of the Truth-society quickly collapses and lives are ruined.

And if the Church of Jesus Christ doesn’t know or doesn’t care about the Deity of Jesus Christ- then who *will* care, Bubba’s bait shop? And if the Bible is not our only Source of Truth and Doctrine- what *should* be our source- our own imaginations or some latest best-seller or

some politician or Oprah? Or Dr, Phil? Or Ladies Home Journal? Or Dear Abby? If we are not going to view the Holy Bible as the only reliable source for Objective, propositional, inspired Truth- then it really doesn't matter what else we do consult.

The Church leaders of the fourth century tried their hand at compromise. They reasoned within themselves that Arius and Alexander may disagree on this one tiny little point of theology, but look at all that they *did* agree on. Surely broad minded and intelligent men of the Church would not allow the Church to be torn apart over one letter of one word. Surely the leaders of the Church in the fourth century could simply brush this petty disagreement under the rug and exalt the many, many areas where these men were in agreement.

So the real issue in the fourth century was the same as the issue is today: Does any of this really matter? Does it matter what we believe and why we believe it? Does it matter from where we get our Doctrine? Does it have any effect on our Salvation and our walk with God and our relationship with Jesus Christ if we are carried away with false teaching and error? Does it matter that the leaders of the Church disagree fundamentally on what the Bible teaches about issues like Salvation; and the Deity of Jesus Christ?

Are Biblical Doctrines about the Virgin birth; the sinless life of Jesus; the Deity of Christ and Justification simply window dressing and food for academics or do they give us insight and knowledge about the One who saves us?

So if you think that Doctrinal purity is all just an exercise among intellectuals and totally irrelevant to the saving of lost souls, then congratulations, you hold the very same view that the majority in the Church in the fourth century held. And that view nearly caused the Church to be destroyed. But if you think that this stuff really matters and that we have to get the Gospel right and we have to know right from wrong and we must understand and value and teach everything that God said was important- then you will be labeled as a troublemaker and will be as unwelcomed as Alexander and Athanasius was in the fourth century. But you just may rescue the Church from serious error.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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