

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 240 Our Triune God Part 12

WAOY Tuesday 08/26/08

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 of the fourth century and it involves a battle within the Church over the Deity of Jesus Christ.

Now last time, we were talking about how that the controversy surrounding the Deity of Christ nearly brought the Church to destruction in the fourth century. And we have seen how that by

overturning laws which punished the Church- the Roman Emperor, Constantine eliminated 300 years of harsh persecution of the Christianity almost overnight. And the net affect was that the people of the fourth century Church became lax in their walk with God and nearly lost the church.

An evil heretic, Arius rose up to denounce the Deity of Jesus Christ. Because this issue threatened to split the Church in half- many leaders within the Church were willing to compromise on Who Jesus was in order to preserve the outward show of unity.

But Alexander, the godly bishop of Alexandria, excommunicated Arius for teaching heresy and by doing this- forced the Church to decide whether or not the Christian Church was going to teach what the Bible reveals about Jesus or teach what Arius said.

So we are now at the point in this real life drama when the Emperor of Rome, Constantine, did something unprecedented. The secular ruler of the Government was so shocked that people in the Church were willing to argue about such a fine point of theology that he took matters into his own hands and he called the Church together to settle this dispute. Again, there were various reasons for this unprecedented action, but the main reason was that Constantine didn't want the Christian Church to be torn apart over something that in his mind didn't matter- like Sound Doctrine.

So Constantine called the Church to gather in the city of Nicaea- which was near to Constantinople in what is today- modern Turkey. According to Eusebius, the historian, the Council convened on June 19, 325 AD with 300 bishops from around the world in attendance. So this was the first truly *ecumenical* council- meaning worldwide because- stop and think about it- this was the first time that all the bishops from around the world could gather together without the fear of persecution.

And Eusebius, the historian, who was physically present at the Council, recorded Constantine's exact words. Among those words were these:

“Discord in the Church I find far more fearful and more painful than any other war”. He said, “When I heard of your division, I was convinced that this matter should by no means be neglected, and in the desire to assist by my service, I have summoned you without delay. I shall, however feel my desire fulfilled only when I see the minds of all united in that peaceful

harmony which you, the anointed of God must preach to others. Delay not therefore, my dear friends, delay not, servants of God. Put away all causes of strife and loose all knots of discord by the laws of peace.”

Now we can sympathize with Constantine here. He was personally grieved that the Church was being divided over Doctrine. Constantine wanted the Church to settle the Arian Controversy one way or the other. Now Constantine personally didn't care which way the Church went on this issue because in his mind it didn't matter at all if Jesus was God or not- he simply wanted peace. The 300 bishops of the Church wanted peace. And I understand that. It should always be the desire for all who know and love the Lord to desire peace. Jesus, the Lord of the Church taught in **Matthew 5:9**:

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

And again, the Apostle Paul has taught in **Romans 12:18**:

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Beloved, anyone who loves the Lord hates division. Only a fool desires to do battle and wage war against anyone. War should be the *last* thing on anyone's list- especially a Christian. I personally cannot stand conflict. I would rather run from it than stand and fight. Christianity itself is a religion that is bathed in love, and we are to live peaceably with all men- but on two conditions:

1. If it is possible
2. So far as it depends on us

And yet- in spite of these Biblical Commands, wars come don't they? And terrible and awful wars come precisely because when we are attacked by people who are determined to destroy us- we only have two choices:

1. We can fight to defend ourselves
2. We can surrender to the attacking nation.

And this is true in the spiritual realm just as much as it is true in the natural. Some people want to destroy other people- they want to take over something- a nation or a city or the Church- and they want to tear it up and conquer it. And for anyone to not realize that there are real bad people in the world who are willing to give their lives to destroy you- is naïve. Because the only solution to being attacked is that we have to be willing to confront these people and defend what we have- even to the point of giving our lives. Because if we're not willing to do that- we will lose what we have- whether that is our nation or our Church.

Because you see, there are always two ways to achieve peace- we can fight until the opposing army surrenders, or we can give up and allow the opposing army to conquer us. *Both* of these methods achieves peace- but only one of these methods is good.

For example- the nations of Eastern Europe enjoyed uninterrupted peace from 1945 until 1993 precisely because they were made slaves to Communist Russia. They had peace- but it was a "slave's peace". Had they fought against enslavement by Russia- the countries of Eastern Europe may have temporarily lost the peace that came from subjugation. But had those nations been successful in defeating Soviet Russia- they would have gained the peace that comes from freedom- which is a far greater and a far better peace than the peace that comes from slavery.

To live with the peace of slavery- nothing is required. You simply give in to those who seek to dominate you. And as long as you serve them without resistance- you can have peace- the peace of a slave.

But if you seek the peace that comes from freedom- you have to be willing to fight and you have to be willing to die and you have to be willing to do whatever it takes- for as long as it takes- to achieve victory.

So because that is true- the Bible does not teach us to live peaceably with all men- period. It tells us to live peaceably with all men *as far as it depends on us- and if it is possible*. But sometimes it isn't possible. And when that moment comes and when we have exhausted all of our efforts and we have utilized all the power than lies within us and after we have exhausted all possibly ways to arrive at peace and have failed- it then falls upon us to either value what we are doing enough to fight for it or give in to those who seek to take us over.

And this was the state of the Church in the fourth century. Arius would not stop attacking the Divinity of Christ. And because of his attacks- the Church was threatened with a terrible divide. And more and more people were becoming convinced that what Arius was teaching might well be true. Arius and his followers were even talking about changing the Scriptures to match what he was teaching about Jesus and a surprising amount of bishops were even considering that as well.

But the majority of the leaders of the Church in the fourth century were cowards- who chose to give in to Arius' heresy rather than see the Church split. They reasoned that it was better to have a unified Church- even if the price of unity was false teaching and blasphemy against Christ's Nature.

Now why would anyone do that? Why would *anyone* who is in the Church in a position of leadership ever be willing to discard Divine Truth in the name of peace? Because they do not love or value the Truth. And people do this all the time- even in our day. And that is precisely why we are watching the modern Church become more and more like the lost pagan world every day. It is why we see sexually perverted people being ordained into positions of leadership in the Church and why weak and effeminate leaders cannot and will not stop it. And it is why more and more people are rebelling against what the Bible declares about a whole list of subjects and doing what is right in their own eyes.

So the Church of the fourth century either had to officially denounce what Arius was teaching as a heresy and formally run him and his followers off- or else the Church had to back off Scripture and allow Arius to teach his false doctrine. Either way would have achieved tranquility and peace within the Church and heal the division, but only one way would be faithful to God.

Now listen, dear friends, the people of God may disagree about many, many things and still be Christians and still be brothers and sisters in Christ. We are commanded to forgive each other and to be merciful to each other and to work with each other so that Christian unity can be preserved.

But nowhere in Scripture are we ever told to accept wrong and false and unbiblical teachings that will alter how we view Christ or how a man is saved or things that pertain to eternity from anyone in the

name of preserving Christian unity. We *are* told however to test the spirits and to hold everything that is written or taught or proclaimed against the Holy Scriptures to see if it is true. And if it is Biblical, we must commend it and accept it- but if it is unscriptural- we not only have the right- we have the *responsibility* to reject it and to cry out against it.

Many people today either don't understand this or don't want to. As I have told you many times before- I do not have the right or the authority or the ability to judge anybody else's heart. I cannot read another man's mind and I can't even judge his motives. And I am not doing that now and God willing, I never will.

But if we believe that no one can be saved unless they hear the Gospel preached rightly and fully and fearlessly- then the integrity of the Word that is preached becomes all important and what we believe and why we believe it becomes paramount. And any attempt by anyone for any reason to monkey around with the everlasting Gospel of God is something that we cannot and we must not tolerate. And when someone's personal theology is so seriously flawed that it corrupts the Biblical understanding of Christ's Deity- then souls are in peril and the leaders of the Church have the responsibility to protect the sheep from these heretics.

So not only do we have the right to denounce false Doctrine- we are abdicating our responsibility as watchmen upon the walls if we do *not* cry out against it. So when you come across with something as serious as Arius was teaching in the fourth century- peace and tranquility and unity are no longer the primary goals. The primary goal becomes the casting down of the false doctrine and the rescuing of God's people from lies that could place them in eternal jeopardy.

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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