



Around the Word BIBLE STUDY

Trinity, 2016

1 John 4:1-12

Christ is Stronger than the strong man:

"Christ is stronger; He has overcome, is overcoming, and will overcome that strong man in us. Still the devil does sometimes overcome us in the flesh, in order that even in this way we may experience the power of the Stronger against that strong man and say with Paul, 'When I am weak, then I am strong'

— Martin Luther

Introduction: In this study, we see the importance of testing the teachings that we come into contact with, and John gives us two helpful litmus tests for this. We also continue looking at the importance of love in the Christian life, and where our love as Christians truly comes from.

Opening: Psalm 138

¹I give you thanks, O LORD, with | my whole heart;*
before the gods I | sing your praise;

²I bow down toward your holy temple
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast
love and your | faithfulness,*
for you have exalted above all things
your name | and your word.

³On the day I called, you | answered me;*
my strength of soul | you increased.

⁴All the kings of the earth shall give you thanks, |
O LORD,*
for they have heard the words | of your mouth,

⁵and they shall sing of the ways | of the LORD,*
for great is the glory | of the LORD.

⁶For though the LORD is high, he regards the |
lowly,*
but the haughty he knows | from afar.

⁷Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you pre- | serve my life;*
you stretch out your hand against the wrath of
my enemies, and your right hand de- | livers me.

⁸The LORD will fulfill his pur- | pose for me;*
your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever.
Do not forsake the work | of your hands.
Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;
as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

4 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Does this sound similar to what God says in Jeremiah 29:8?

Read 2 John 7. Were these deceivers flesh and blood people, or were they demons?

What does Paul say the role of hearers of prophecy is in 1 Corinthians 14:29?

What does Jesus commend the congregation in Ephesus for doing in Revelation 2:2?

Remember, John spent a significant amount of time in Ephesus. Did they listen to him on this matter?

Read 1 Timothy 4:1-3. The teachings of demons come to people out of the lips of the false prophets warned of here by John.

After looking at these other texts of Scripture, do you think that John in this verse is talking about carrying on conversations with demons and spirits, or is he talking about testing the teachings of anyone who claims to be speaking for God?

² By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

Read John 6:44. How is it that someone can come to the Father?

How was Peter able to make his confession of faith? Read Matthew 16:16-17

How is one able to Jesus as Lord? Read 1 Corinthians 12:3.

John refers back to the opening of this letter (1 John 1:1) regarding what is the faithful proclamation of Jesus. Is the denial of Christ's physical coming the only heresy that the Church has had to contend with through the ages?

⁴ Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Does God invite us to fear or confidence? Read 2 Chronicles 32:7-8.

Read Romans 8:31-33. Why should we have no fear in the face of the world?

Where do you think John got the language to speak about overcoming the world and false teachers? Read John 16:33.

⁵ They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them.

Read John 3:5-8. How is one saved from being from the world?

This Bible Study is brought to you by Issues, Etc. Listen on demand at www.issuesetc.org.

Issues, Etc.



Christ-Centered Cross-Focused Talk Radio

www.issuesetc.org

In John 8:23-34, how does this teaching presented by John here show up in Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees?

If we are not from the world, how can we expect to be treated by those from the world? Read John 15:18-20.

This is a second test that John gives us for testing the spirit of a teacher. What does it look like in our day when the world listens to a false teacher?

⁶We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

John here is again reflecting the words of Jesus as found in John 8:47.

What is John saying about the apostolic office? Read Luke 10:16 to see why an apostle would have such a high opinion of his teaching.

Read John 15:26. Who is the Spirit of truth?

Should we take what is written in verses 5 and 6 of this chapter as justification to give up on people who do not believe?

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

John is now revisiting his previous teaching about loving one another. We find this in 3:11.

Why do you think John is so worried about Christians loving one another? Read John 13:34-35.

Read John 1:12-13. How is one born of God? We can also see this answered in John 3:5 and Romans 10:17.

⁸Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

This passage is an often abused section of Scripture. Look back to 1 John 3:16. What does God's love mean? What does it look like for us?

Look back again to 1 John 3:14. Where does the one who does not love abide?

If God's love is revealed at the cross where Christ died for sins, does God's love mean that he is unconcerned with sins?

⁹In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

Where did John hear Jesus say something similar to this? Read John 3:16.

BIBLE STUDY

1 John 4:1-12

Because we have received this great love, how should this impact our lives? Read Titus 2:11-14.

How do we live through Christ? Read John 6:57. Does this make Church attendance an important part of the Christian life?

¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

According to Romans 5:7-8, can we be more specific about the great mercy that we find in God's love at the cross?



Read Colossians 1:19-20. Have you been reconciled to God? How?

This verse shows us that our love for God does not save us, but rather it is in God's love for us that we find salvation.

¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Read Jesus' parable in Matthew 18:21-35. How does this parable illustrate what John is teaching here?

The beginning of this verse begins by reflecting the beginning of John 3:16 and then moves to encourage us in the Christian life, which is the whole point and tactic of this letter.

Our good works flow from an appreciation of what God has done for us first.

¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

If no one has ever seen God, how can we know God? Read John 1:18.

John 14:9-10 shows us a more full answer to the question of seeing God.

With this in mind, how should we regard those who claim to have had special visions or revelations of God apart from Scripture?

We have seen throughout this book that John speaks often about abiding in God, reflecting Jesus' words in John 6. Here we see further that God's love in us is perfected as we serve our neighbor.

Closing Hymn: The King of Love My Shepherd Is (LSB, 709)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR Rev. Quintin Cundiff is pastor of Calvary Lutheran Church in Rio Rancho, NM (calvarylutheranchurch-lcms.org). You can contact him at pastorcundiff@gmail.com.