

ARE YOU CALLING GOD A LIAR? – 1 JOHN 5:5-12

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⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. ⁶ This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. ⁹ We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. ¹⁰ Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.



Dear fellow believers in God's Son who gives us life,

Have you ever been driving along the road and the car in front of you has a bumper sticker on the back of it? Or perhaps they have no self-control and have dozens of bumper stickers on the back? Sometimes the bumper stickers are funny, sometimes they are political, and sometimes they are in support of a band or an ideology. I always enjoy trying to play phycologist and get into the head of the person driving that vehicle.

One particular bumper sticker I have seen a number of times and I was interested in hearing your opinion on it, is the "Coexist" bumper sticker. Each of the letters of "coexist" have a religious symbol attached to it. I think there are two diverging viewpoints of people who would put this bumper sticker on their car. 1) Religions should be able to peacefully coexist with one another, while respecting the others' beliefs. And 2) Each religion is as good as another, and it's just a matter of preference, so everybody should coexist.

Now I think it's pretty obvious, if given a choice, which viewpoint I could agree with more. It's true that we freedom in non-spiritual matters to be able to choose any number of different paths. Especially in this country, we have the freedom to choose to follow whichever religion we want to, and the freedom to practice that religion without fear of being persecuted – whether Christian, Muslim, or even Atheist. However, what I can't agree with, based on the Bible, is calling every religion equal, or the "all paths lead to the same place" philosophy. In fact, God is pretty clear about those who are not Christian, they are calling God a liar. But if you think that the only people who can call God a liar are non-Christians, then you had better re-think your position on the question and ask yourself, ARE YOU CALLING GOD A LIAR?

Last week we began the long season in the church year called Pentecost. It's the time in the church year where we focus more upon the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. As we go through these next several weeks, we will be reminded how a believer will act. This morning, we see how a believer acts when God tells us something in his Word.

For some of us, it may seem obvious how we should respond to God's Word, but let me remind you, what we should do and what we do do can be two very different things. The words of God that we have as consideration this morning come from the Apostle John. This is the same John who wrote the gospel of John. He has a very simple, get-to-the-point style, something that can be very refreshing in today's day and age. But this simple get to the point style can really fly in our faces and cause us to become defensive at times.

The apostle John has been writing at some length about how good it is to be in Christ. Christ is his focus, and well he should be. John was reminding his readers about this, because when they looked out at the world, they saw anything but victory. Not only did the church of the late 1st century AD face their share of problems, but the church of all time has faced its share of problems. For some, it might seem to fly in the face of everything the church teaches. Isn't the church supposed to look victorious? Aren't people supposed to treat the church with respect? And if the church is victorious, then why can't we just force this victory upon others?

These are the thoughts of sinful human creatures who have nothing better to think about than what they know, than what benefits them directly. But John reminds his listeners that believers in Jesus are indeed victorious, even in this world. They are victorious because of what Jesus has done. The irrefutable proof of water and blood. The two significant events in Jesus' life were his baptism (the water), when Jesus began his public ministry to save us, and his bloody crucifixion on the cross, whereby he paid the punishment for all of our sins. If this were not enough, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be the third witness to who Jesus was. Last week, we were reminded of the Holy Spirit coming down on the disciples at Pentecost, from which they proclaimed the truth about Jesus Christ.

These are three witnesses, or events that support who Jesus is and what he came to do. This is the evidence God has given to the world to support his claim that Jesus is the Messiah. And in this courtroom there's only two ways people can respond. John lays them out quite clearly, **"Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son."**

Let me give you a modern day example to describe what this is saying. Last weekend we celebrated Memorial Day – remembering those who have died while fighting for our freedom. What if I told you I don't believe any of that? All those wars that we fought were just political propaganda meant to give us a sense of peace and patriotism in our country. All the memorials that have been set up are faked. I hope that would make you a little bit upset, especially if you know someone who did die for our freedom. You would hopefully call me a liar, because I didn't believe the clear evidence. That's how John is describing someone who denies this evidence God has presented.

But we usually don't have the same reaction to people who reject the gospel as those who reject our country. Why is that? I think many of us recognize what God says regarding belief and unbelief. But I wonder if we really think about what that means. You see, God didn't just sacrifice his son "for the fun of it." He didn't just sacrifice his son because that might motivate people to live better lives. This supreme sacrifice, which tore his fatherly heart out, was made in order to spare people the torment that Satan will suffer in hell.

But how often do we treat God's Word's lightly? When we deny sin is a sin. When we think hating someone is less sinful than killing them, pornography or lust is a lesser sin than adultery. When we make the excuse that it's not hurting someone when we covet or speak maliciously about someone. Maybe we don't deny that sin is a sin, but how often do we not believe God when he describes the punishment for sin. It's much easier to justify our sin when we know we can use "Jesus" as our safe word. Or perhaps it's difficult to believe something the Bible says or describes – like the Trinity, or how God predestines some to go to heaven and so we say God would never want us to believe something we don't understand.

It's at times like these that essentially speaking, WE ARE CALLING GOD A LIAR. In the Old Testament, there was a man named Job who went through a period of intense suffering. And while he endured for a time, he eventually snapped and questioned God. Do you know what God's answer was? **"Where were you when I created the earth...where were you when I planned out its existence?"** We have no right to question God, we have no right to call him a liar.

Everything God has said in his word is true. This applies to the parts we understand clearly – like Jesus dying on the cross for our sins, it also applies to the parts we understand less clearly – like the Trinity, it applies to the parts that we don't want to hear, and it applies to the parts we need to hear. As a Christian, it is not our job to be able to understand the mysteries of God, but to believe the testimony that God has given. The believer has faith that trusts in the one true God.

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It is a faith that John lays out very clearly. It's a simple equation really, **"God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."**

The first part of the equation is simple enough, **"God has given us eternal life."** He hasn't given it to us to earn, he hasn't given it to us as an obligation on his part, he has handed to us eternal life, that's all there is to it. God is not lying when he says he has given us eternal life. He has given us this eternal life in his Son – the very life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – the Messiah.

Those who believe in the Son have life already. It's not something that is far off that we are waiting for, we have it right now. The sins which we have committed have been wiped away. Our debt has been paid. We have been raised to spiritual life right now, our relationship with God is restored, and we can ask for anything in his name with confidence that he will hear us. God is not lying when he says this.

The flip side for this of course is, **"he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."** Think about the gravity of that statement for a moment. God is not lying when we says this. Think about

all of those people who do not have the Son of God dwelling in their hearts. They are the literal walking dead. Unfortunately they don't know how dead they are. Unfortunately, they would rather stay dead, than become alive in Christ. Which makes the believers' role all that more important.

The believer's role is not to fix God's broken heart over sinners who don't repent. The believer's role is not to make people believe. It's the believer's role to share the unending, boundless love of God. A love that sacrificed his only Son to spare us the torment of hell. We share this first of all by taking God's Word seriously, and not accuse him of lying in his Word. We share this love in the love we show others. And we share this love in the words we speak to others.

Now, maybe we could start a new bumper sticker craze with the words, "ARE YOU CALLING GOD A LIAR?" But I don't think that will take off. While that might get people to think what that means, more likely it will just offend them. Instead, we can call ourselves to account and consider if we have called God a liar. If and when we have, we must repent of those sins, before sharing with others the witness that our Triune God has left us. Amen.