[Beautiful Aftermath: 1 John 4]

Intro:

+ Welcome!

+ It’s been said that two most difficult things to get straight in life are **love** and **God.**

+ For better or worse, those two things are underneath all the other things in our lives.

+ More often than not, when we make a mess of our lives it can be traced to a failure,

ignorance, or meanness in one of both of those areas.

+ The basic witness of the Bible is that love and God are intricately related.

+ If you want to love the right way, then you have to deal with God the right way.

+ If you want to deal with God the right way, then we have to learn to love the right way.

+ Jesus enters into history to provide the full and true understanding of God as well as the full

and true understanding of the outworking of mature love.

+ But there have always been people around who don’t want to be pinned down to the God

Jesus reveals, to the love Jesus reveals.

+ They want to make up their own style of God and make up their own style of love.

+ 1 John was written to help us see that the arrival of Jesus in history offers us a choice: We can

either make up our own version of God and love, or we can trust the God and love

revealed in Jesus – and what we decide on that will impact everything in our lives.

+ Let’s consider that, but before we do, let’s pray.

[Prayer]

+ Today, we jump into 1 John 4.

+ If this chapter were a painting, there would be three bold colors that show up throughout the

chapter:

1. Doctrine: what you believe about God.
2. Judgment: those made by us and one us.
3. Love: the love of God for us and others, and then us for God and others.

+ John is writing to counter the influence of those who got their doctrine wrong, which leads to

a wrong view of love, which leads to a wrong view on judgment.

+ Back then, these false teachers denied that Jesus really came in the flesh.

+ Because of that, they said the soul and body were unconnected, which led them to believe

that you could do whatever you wanted with their bodies – or others – with no impact

on their soul.

+ You might be thinking: so what? Who cares? Why does this matter to me today?

+ Here’s why:

 **Our lives move in the direction of our strongest thoughts.**

+ It happened to people back then and it happens to us now.

+ This why 1 John is saying that right teaching is so important.

+ Our theology eventually becomes our autobiography.

+ So with the time we have, I want to give you two thoughts to make strong thoughts in your

heart and mind from 1 John 4.

+ 1 John 4:1f says:

**1John 4:1**   Beloved, do not believe everyone who claims to speak by the Spirit. You must test them to see if the spirit they have comes from God. For there are many false prophets in the world. **2** This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ came in a real body, that person has the Spirit of God. **3** But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed is already here.

**1John 4:4**   But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world. **5** Those people belong to this world, so they speak from the world’s viewpoint, and the world listens to them. **6** But we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception.

***1. You get to make your judgments, but then your judgments make you.***

+ John just laid out ways we can make judgments about what we will believe.

+ There will always be false teachers who claim to speak for God: maybe they do, maybe they

don’t. How do you know?

+ John is saying: If they do not affirm God’s word, then they are not filled with God’s Spirit.

+ It seems almost too elementary to teach on this – but here’s the problem: the problem keeps

arising.

+ All throughout history there have been eloquent, popular, captivating speakers with

charismatic personalities who started out preaching the gospel only to slowly drift away

from the truth and the authority of God’s word.

+ I can think of 2 particular pastors I used to read and quote that I no longer do because they

have departed from God’s Word.

+ They are no longer pastors any more – which makes sense to me.

+ Now, before that is a downer for you, for every pastor I can think of who have departed from

God’s Word, I can think of 100 more that have not including some really unbelievable

young leaders on the rise to serve God’s people and His kingdom.

+ Being a pastor who doesn’t believe in God’s Word is like being a doctor who doesn’t believe in

medicine; it’s like being a mechanic with a broken-down car; it’s like being a skinny

baker.

+ Never trust a skinny baker; and never trust someone who says they come from God who will

not affirm all that God’s word affirms.

+ Of course, not all false teachers start out as part of the church, but John makes it clear that

some did.

+ Earlier in **1 John 2:19** “These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us;

otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not

belong with us.”

+ Wherever truth exists, falsehood always appears.

+ The enemy always seeks to attack God’s word. Usually it’s subtle, but sometimes it’s blatant.

+ Illus. Just this month, the Harvest Crusade in Orange County with Greg Laurie was forced to

remove advertisement banners at the Newport Mall because of serious threats received by the mall because the advertisement included a picture of a Bible.

+ The mall refunded the money that had been paid to post the advertisements for fear of a

violent attack on the mall due to a picture of a Bible.

+ The enemy always attacks God’s word; the problem with attacking God’s Word is that when

all is said and done, you will lose.

+ People sometimes talk about breaking God’s Word.

+ You can’t break God’s word; you can only break your life on God’s word.

+ You break your life on God’s word when you decide to disobey God’s word.

+ Charles Spurgeon: “The Word of God is like a lion. You don’t have to defend a lion. All you

have to do is let the lion loose, and the lion will defend itself.”

+ John is telling us that we have to make judgments on whether people are teaching God’s

word.

+ Christian faith is not spiritual gullibility.

+ Anyone can talk about Jesus and even believe that he lived on earth, as other religions, cults,

and philosophies often affirm.

+ But unless such people affirm both the full deity and the full humanity of Jesus, and that he is

the only way to the Father, then they are not truly “confessing Jesus,” but, as John states in unequivocal terms, they are under the influence of the spirit of the antichrist.

+ People who deny sound doctrine are not true followers of Jesus.

+ Now, any time you exercise wise discernment, others can view it as being judgmental.

+ Even some will throw out Matthew 7:1 “Do not judge others.”

+ But did Jesus really mean that we should never make any judgment? Of course not.

+ How do we know this? Because later in the same chapter Jesus himself said: “Beware of false

prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. You can

identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act.” Matthew 7:15-16

+ Plus, Jesus also said: John 7:24 “Look beneath the surface so that you can judge

correctly.”

+ And God’s word also tells us that a “The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all

things…”1 Cor. 2:15a

+ We must always let God’s word interpret God’s word.

+ When Jesus says do not judge, in context he means do not be unfair or uncharitable in your

judgments – do not be quick to condemn others based off your own self-made criteria.

+ The very next thing he says is “For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and

with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”Matthew 7:2

+ He never meant, nor said, “do not make any wise and discerning decisions about false

teachers.”

+ In fact, he said just the opposite and so does 1 John 4.

+ So you get to make your judgments but then your judgments get to make you because our

lives move in the direction of our strongest thoughts.

***2. True love gives something to us and expects something from us***

1 John 4 continues:

**1John 4:7**    Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. **8** Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

+ God expects his love for us does not end with us.

+ Don’t get confused about the true nature of love.

+ Those who do not love us neither give anything to us nor expect anything from us.

+ But those who love us both give something to us and then also rightly expect something from

us.

+ Accountability is a form of love.

+ I do not hold someone accountable that I could care less about.

+ You know who I hold accountable?: Those that I love.

+ Now it’s important to not get confused and mishear this passage.

+ Otherwise you might think: “Oh, well, I am loving, so I must know God.”

+ Not necessarily.

+ That is called a logical fallacy.

+ Here’s another example of a logical fallacy:

 All dogs are animals. Cats are animals. Therefore, all dogs are cats.

+ The first two statements are correct – but the conclusion is wrong.

+ 1 John is saying: those who do not believe in Christ may be able to be loving to some degree,

but *not in the same gospel-centered way that God’s indwelling presence empowers*

*Christians to love.*

+ But then he doesn’t let Christians off the hook because he says if we do not love with that

gospel-empowered God, then we do not know God.

+ In other words, the person who lacks love shows themselves to be unchanged at the core of

their being by the gospel message.

+ So John is not saying that God is *only* love (he has numerous other attributes), nor that love is

God (a statement for which there is no scriptural support).

+ When he says God is love it means that God gives of himself to us and seeks our benefit and

good – but we must respond.

+ *God’s love is without condition, but it not without expectation.*

+ We can see this in vss 9f:

**9** This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. **10** This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. **11** Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

+ God sent his one and only Son into the world while we were still yet sinners – in other words,

he loved us without condition.

+ But this love that is without condition is not without expectation: “Dear friends, since God

loved us, we also ought to love on another.”

+ The love that 1 John is talking about is not sentimentality or just good feelings.

+ Many people think love means to strongly affirm and encourage someone in their choices, no

matter what choices they make.

+ Such a skewed definition of love will make it extremely difficult for you to accept the hard

sayings of Jesus, especially those that call for significant and extended self-restraint or

even self-denial.

+ Larry Osborne says it this way:

 “Thanks to our culture’s current definition of love…anything that calls for extreme or

extended self-denial is written off as harsh, legalistic, unrealistic, and cruel. Many in the

church have set aside significant portions of the Bible and the Gospels in their pursuit of

being more loving more and more like Jesus. And they see know irony in it. They have bought into the original lie of Satan: “Did God really say…?” (Genesis 3:1). And they have decided Satan is right; there’s no way a loving God could have said or expected that. It’s too difficult or painful to expect anyone to live that way.”

+ When you are confused about the nature of God, you become confused about the nature of

Love; when you are confused about the nature of love, you find it unimaginable that a

loving God could ever ask you to do something difficult, hard, or painful.

+ But when we see the gospel and we see the cross, we understand that God may very well ask

us to do something that is difficult, hard, or even painful that requires self-denial.

+ When he asks us to do this, it’s not because he doesn’t love us – it’s because he does.

+ By the end of the chapter, John brings all three of his themes together: doctrine, love, &

judgment.

+ Here’s what he says:

**15** If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. **16** And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

+ It’s not just doctrine; it’s not just love; it’s both.

+ What we tend to separate, God unifies.

+ **17** This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. **18** There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

+ In this life, we make judgments hopefully wisely, humbly, and honestly by God’s Word.

+ But we ultimately will all stand before God to judge our lives too.

+ We will all live forever somewhere.

+ Either eternal *fellowship with God* or eternal *separation from God* awaits all of humanity, and

God’s love furnishes a sure hope for those who have trusted in him.

+ “No fear in love” does not rule out the presence and constructive effect of “the fear of the

Lord” that is the beginning of knowledge (see Prov. 1:7)

+ God is telling us love being made complete among us growing into maturity in Christ removes

fear of judgment.

+ As Frederick Beuchner said: *“In other words, the one who judges us most finally will be the*

*one who loves us most fully.”*

+ So how does this all work out practically according 1 John?

**1John 4:19**    We love because he first loved us. **20** Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister in Christ is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. **21** And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister in Christ.

**Close:**

+ Let’s pray.

+ **Our lives move in the direction of our strongest thoughts.** You get to make your judgments

about what you will allow to be your strongest thoughts – but then those judgments will

end up making your life.

1. **Test every spirit.** If what they are teaching does not affirm God’s Word, then make the judgment to not listen to them anymore. Only fill your mind with messages that are true and affirm God’s word. 1 John is saying your life will ultimately move in the direction of your strongest thoughts; your strongest thoughts will be whatever you choose to fill your mind with.
2. **Love the Church**. John is writing to believers. His command: love your brothers and sisters in Christ. Speak well of the church. Don’t gossip. Don’t complain. If you have a legitimate issue with another believer, address it with them as an act of love. Church, Jesus Christ loves you. And I do too. You are the most wonderful, beautiful, and majestic gathering in all of history. You seem so fragile and weak, but you have outlived empires. You have started hospitals, literacy centers, orphanages, fostered kids, and loved the least of these in Jesus’ name. Are you perfect? No. Have we had to repent of sins? Yes. But I will stack your historical record against any government, army, political party, university, company, or nation. You have outlived all the empires that thought you would be nothing by now. And you will outlive all the haters who think you will be nothing in the near future.

+ We get one shot at Fall of 2018. Let’s make one where our strongest thoughts are affirm

God’s truth and live in God’s love for God and for one another.

+ **Life Group Fair:** 1 John 4:21: And God has given us this command: Anyone who loves God

must also love their brother and sister in Christ.

- We want every single person who calls CA home to be in a life group – so that you can

know and be known – and so that you love your brother and sister in Christ.

- We don’t want you to be disconnected.

- God’s word wants us to know and love one another. Join us in the church park.