

**Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.**

<sup>6</sup>**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.** <sup>7</sup>**For there are three that testify:** <sup>8</sup>**the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.** <sup>9</sup>**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.** <sup>10</sup>**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.** <sup>11</sup>**And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.** <sup>12</sup>**He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.** (NIV84)

Theme: The Reliable Testimony of the Triune God:

1. Jesus is true God from eternity
2. In him we are given eternal life.

Someone is murdered—a heinous crime. There is a witness, an arrest and charge are made, and the trial begins. The prosecution thinks that the witness makes the case a slam-dunk; along with all the other evidence that they have it is a no-brainer, they caught the murderer and he will pay for his crime. It is the job of the defense attorney to question the credibility of the witness. Where exactly was he, what exactly did he see; he is going to search for any possible inconsistency. He’ll see if the witness is biased one way or another—was he close to the one who lost his life, did he have any issues against the one who was accused. Was he in his right mind when the crime took place—The attorney tries to discredit the witnesses, making his testimony invalid and get his client free.

In this first letter of John, Jesus is on trial, so to speak—not trying to figure out who the murderer was, but who Jesus was when he was murdered. The Lord has laid out in his Word that, **Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.** On the side of the truth are three witnesses—and they all claim that Christ is

true God from eternity; and that the divinity took on flesh at his conception and died on the cross.

On the other side was a man named Cerinthus, a former Jew from Ephesus, active during the days of the Apostles. He mixed Jewish teachings with his version of Christianity, demanding that Christians obey certain laws of Moses in order to be saved. He is known as an early gnostic, a pseudo-religion/philosophy that emphasized knowledge and reason over what God says in his Word.

Above all else; his main teaching—and the one that really applies to us today, is that he denied the full divinity of Christ. He claimed that Jesus was the physical son of Joseph, not conceived by the Holy Spirit. He claimed that the “eon Christ” or the eternal Christ, that is, his divine nature, joined the human Jesus at his baptism and left him shortly before his passion. In other words Jesus isn’t fully God and he was only man when he died on the cross.

Of course this has profound implications. If Jesus wasn’t really God when he died, then we aren’t really saved. For we read in Psalm 49, **no man can redeem the life of another.** If Jesus isn’t fully God, then he would have been born into sin, he would have not been able to live a perfect life; he could not credit his life to us. In short if Jesus isn’t fully God then we are still sinners and we are still on our way to hell. Because this false teaching was so dangerous to the souls of everyone, John spent much of this first letter addressing these false teachings. Cerinthus used his so-called knowledge and reason to reject God’s Word. You still hear those same arguments: “That’s not possible, it doesn’t make any sense; it can’t be true.” The use of reason, logic, and science, often trumps what God says in his Word. So do people’s feelings and emotions—someone doesn’t believe or feel that God’s Word is true on a particular point so it must not be; they say things like, “God just wants me to be happy, so he won’t really care that I’m going against his Word, because it makes me happy.” Or what society says is right trumps everything else, “I just don’t think that God would say such things about certain groups of people.”

You name the doctrine and there is someone somewhere who denies it—either on the basis of reason and science, or on their feelings and emotions. This is true even among those who claim to be Christians.

There are millions of people who claim to be Christian and yet they deny Jesus' full divinity just as Cerinthus.

That false testimony was man's opinion. On the other hand you had the truth, that Jesus is fully God from eternity, that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit, that the eternal God took on human flesh and that he died and rose from the dead. And this isn't made up, but is found in Scripture. As John says, **There are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.**

The Spirit, refers to the Holy Spirit, of course. Through the Word, which he inspired to be written down, we learn of everything concerning Christ—that he truly is the Son of God, and if he is the Son of God, than he is the eternal God himself! That was on the major points that John makes in both his gospel and his first letter. For instance in the first chapter of his gospel is he says, **in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.** And few verses after our text John also says, **we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.** The Holy Spirit testifies concerning Christ through his Word; and through the Word he brings us to faith and strengthens our faith in something we are willing to admit, is foolishness.

The other two that testify about Christ are the water and the blood. John says earlier in our text, **Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood.** The water refers to Christ's baptism. Do you remember how the Triune God revealed himself as three separate persons at Jesus' baptism? Obvious, the God the son is seen in Jesus. The Holy Spirit came from heaven in the form of a dove and landed on him. And the Father spoke from heaven, **This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.** So not only do we see the Trinity, but God himself testified that Jesus is the Son of God, and thus also God himself.

The blood doesn't refer to the Lord's Supper, as we first might surmise. Remember that Cerinthus claimed that Jesus ceased to be God shortly before he suffered and died. Here John is saying that the blood that Jesus shed on the cross, testifies that he truly is God. Everything about Jesus' death and especially his resurrection testifies about this. His words on the cross: **Father, into your hands, I commit my Spirit, and today, you will be with me in Paradise;** the words of the Centurion, **truly this man was the son of God;** and Christ's own victory over death all prove that he truly is God. They

testify that he paid for our sins and defeated death. All of this proves that Jesus is fully God and fully man.

So there are three that testify to Jesus' divinity—the Holy Spirit who works through the Word, the water of Jesus' baptism at which the Holy Spirit landed on Jesus as a dove and the Father spoke from heaven, and the blood that Jesus shed on the cross only to rise from the dead three days later. That is the testimony God. And then there is the testimony of Cerinthus and others like him who deny that Jesus is God. Whose testimony are you going to listen to? Who is a more reliable witness?

“God of course,” we say. No one here is going to listen to man's testimony over God's when it comes to who Jesus is. And if that's the case, then it is the case with everything that God says in his Word. It doesn't matter what science, or reason and logic, your feelings and emotions, or society says is right. The only testimony that matters is the testimony of God—of the Holy Spirit which he has written down in his Holy Word.

It doesn't matter if Jesus' dual nature makes sense or not. It doesn't matter if his miracles and resurrection are possible according to the laws of science, it doesn't matter what a certain individual or society says is right. What matters is the testimony of God. We believe something that is contrary to the opinions of society, offensive to reason, and against science. We believe something foolish simply because it is the testimony of God. It is the testimony of the Holy Spirit who works through that testimony to bring us to faith and keep us in the one true faith.

And it should go without saying, but we'll mention it any way—what is the big deal about Jesus' divinity? Why was John so adamant in confessing the truth concerning Jesus' dual nature; and why do we do the same? Because our salvation depends on it. Without Jesus being true God and true man at the same time, then we are still sinners. Jesus had to be true man to be under the law, but he had to be true God in order to keep the law perfectly. He had to be true man to serve as our substitute, and yet if he wasn't true God he wouldn't have been able to take our sins upon himself and give us his perfect life. This is one of the central teachings of Scripture—if we lose the teaching of Jesus' divine nature, then we lose the one true faith and we won't be saved.

Jesus' dual nature and our salvation go hand in hand. That is what John says in verse 11 when he says about God's testimony, **God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.** Those who believe that Jesus is fully God from eternity will be saved from sin and given the gift of eternal life in heaven; but those who reject this fact will be condemned.

There is another reason why we are so adamant on accepting the testimony of God instead of man: if we cave in on even one doctrine, even if it's a seemingly small and insignificant teaching, if we listen to man rather than God even on one point, then we open ourselves up to attacks from the devil. If we deny one teaching of Scripture for whatever reason, what is stopping us from denying another teaching, one that is fundamental to our faith? And so we listen to God's testimony over man's each and every day.

Salvation is through faith in the Triune God, which we celebrate today. And how great and appropriate is it, on this Trinity Sunday, to baptize a child of God in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! Why do we baptize someone—it doesn't make any sense that pouring water over someone's head in the name of the Triune God would do any good. How can such an act forgive sins, bring to faith, and thus save? It doesn't make any sense; and yet we do so because the Lord promises us in his very word that this is what he does through baptism. So we baptize in the name of the Triune God knowing that it is he who works through the waters of baptism and saves us!

And it is through our baptisms that we are connected to Christ and his baptism, at which all three persons of the Holy Trinity testify to Jesus' divinity! Because Christ is true God from eternity and also true man, we know that he is also our Savior from sin. It is through our baptisms in the name of the Triune God that we are connected to the work of the God-man, Jesus Christ as Paul says in Romans 6, **don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.**

In a trial a reliable and credible witness is a must-have. How more important is a reliable testimony when it comes to our salvation. And what better testimony can we have than from God himself—the Holy

Spirit working through the Word, the Father's words at Jesus' baptism, and Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection! Yes, Jesus is true God and through him we have eternal life. Amen.