

WALKING IN THE LIGHT- First John and the Path to Living Deeply in Christ - Part ten
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ANTICHRIST, THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST, AND THE ANOINTING

1 John 2:18-29 - "Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. [19] They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. [20] But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. [21] I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. [22] Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. [23] No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. [24] Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. [25] And this is the promise that he made to us— eternal life. [26] I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. [27] But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything—and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you—abide in him. [28] And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. [29] If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him."

There are several things that make this passage a bit more challenging to deal with:

A) JOHN INTRODUCES THE PERSON AND WORK OF ANTICHRIST FOR THE FIRST TIME

John is the only one to actually use that word though the subject is covered frequently in the scriptures. Also, he uses the term in at least *two different ways*. He writes about the *person of antichrist* who is yet to appear on the horizon (18a) and he also used the word antichrist to describe the *spiritual activity of certain people who were alive and active as he wrote* (18b).

B) THIS TEXT IS ALSO WHERE JOHN INTRODUCES THE SUBJECT OF THE ANOINTING (20 & 27)

He talks about the anointing that *teaches all things*, and then *he goes on to teach about it!*

C) ADD TO ALL OF THIS THE FACT THAT THIS PASSAGE DEALS FERVENTLY WITH A SUBJECT WE DON'T HEAR ABOUT ANYMORE - FALSE TEACHING IN THE CHURCH

The church hasn't had much interest in this subject for several generations. And there's a reason for that. This is the age of **religious pluralism**. We sing the praises of **open-mindedness** and **religious tolerance**. The worst sin you can commit is to be too **harsh** or **judgmental**. **Nobody** is worried about the sin of being too **gullible**.

So John's words really sound like relics from another era. We're almost embarrassed for him. And all of those factors make it challenging to open up our hearts to hear what the Spirit might want to say to the church today. But if the truth always sets free, error always brings bondage. So here are some abiding truths from a difficult passage:

1) **THE DANGER OF MIXED UP DOCTRINE AND DEPARTURE FROM THE TRUTH INCREASES AS THE CHURCH AGES DRAWS TO A CLOSE**

1 John 2:18-19 - "Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. [19] They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us."

Increasingly, as the years role by and as this age draws to a close, the church will have to switch where it looks for its greatest enemies. The danger won't be **persecution from the outside**, but **deception from the inside**. People will embrace teachings they shouldn't embrace. Many in the church will confuse being **tender-hearted** with being **soft-minded**. And they'll actually think they're being more like Jesus in this.

John says people won't want to **confront false thinking** in church. They will want to **feel** certain things. They will want to **enjoy** the fellowship and the worship. And that will mean they will link spirituality with a certain **emotional state** rather than **walking in the truth**.

But John is very concerned we see the connection between **spirituality** and **rejecting falsehood**. There is no spirituality apart from rejecting error. Notice the words "... you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come...." John made sure

they were taught about this. They were not only warned about the **person** of antichrist who would **persecute them from without**, but also of the **spirit** of antichrist who would **deceive them from within**.

The real enemy isn't the enemy you see. The real enemy is the invisible personality **behind** the person you see. You don't easily recognize Satan's hand in all the darkness and confusion. If you could easily trace his hand he wouldn't be called the deceiver. What makes him deceptive is you don't think it's him at all.

I believe he pollutes the power of the truth in the church in **four ways**:

A) HE CREATES A LAZY CLIMATE WHERE BEING ENTERTAINED IS PREFERRED TO GETTING WISDOM

Proverbs 23:12, 8:10-11 - "Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge....[10]....Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, [11] for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her."

B) HE SNATCHES TRUTH AWAY FROM THE MIND BEFORE IT IS DIGESTED INTO THE LIFE

Matthew 13:19 - "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path."

C) HE DISTRACTS US FROM APPLYING THE TRUTH TO OUR LIVES BY MAKING RICHES AND PLEASURE SEEM MORE DESIRABLE

Matthew 13:22 - "As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful."

D) HE CENTERS OUR ATTENTION ON RELIGION OR PERSONAL MORALITY APART FROM JESUS CHRIST

Colossians 2:8-10 - "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. [9] For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, [10] and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority."

And so once again, John writes to his "***dear children***"(18). He's trying to get them ready for a change in the wind. He says, "You're going to see more and more skeptics rising to the surface. You will see people - your own friends and family - give up on Christian truth. Mockers will have the floor. People won't have much taste for simply learning the truth anymore and that will mean you will be called "***intolerant***" and, heaven forbid, perhaps even "***dogmatic.***"

And John confirms their trust and confidence by reminding them that they must be careful but not alarmed by these things. They're signs of the last days - the last hour. The faithful are to see these things and take heart that Jesus isn't far away. They will soon be going home.

2) AFTER TALKING ABOUT THE DANGERS FACING THE CHURCH, JOHN POINTS OUT THE RESOURCES TO KEEP THEM IN THE TRUTH

1 John 2:20,27 - "But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge....[27].... But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything—and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you—abide in him."

The anointing. The words conjure up different pictures in our minds: a preacher who takes his jacket off, sweats and yells and gets the crowd saying "Amen!" - miracles happening at an altar - someone who prays in such a way that you are moved by the power in his voice - a church service that goes on until midnight but nobody notices the passing of the hours.....All of those things have been described by those two little words, "***the anointing.***"

Ironically, this is the only place in the New Testament where the word "**anointing**" is used. It occurs nowhere else. (Anoint as a **verb** is used - as in anointing someone with oil, or someone was anointed for a specific ministry. But the general term "**the anointing**" appears only here). That means we don't have options as to the **meaning** we'll attach to it. John is our only guide.

And what we find is the word has more to it than just implying some kind of **spiritual condition** or **glow** or **emotional level**. John uses the word to describe **spiritual perseverance in living in the power of revealed truth**.

In other words, anointing has to do with **grasping the truth**. It has to do with being **possessed by the power of the truth**. And, perhaps even more accurately, it has to do with the power to **recognize and abstain from doctrinal error**. Specifically, the anointing of the Holy Spirit will, more than anything else, **ground people in the specific truth about the Person and work of Jesus Christ**.

This is the heart of John's concern. He wants people to be grounded firmly in the person of Jesus Christ. He puts the issues on the table. The lie and the truth are both spelled out in **verses 22-23** - "**Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. [23] No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.**"

These verses sharpen the issue for us. Notice the particular **kind** of denial John is dealing with. These false teachers weren't denying the **person or existence of God**. They believed in God. What they denied was much more subtle and much more dangerous. They denied that God came into this world in Jesus Christ, that He died on a cross and rose bodily from the grave. They denied that the only way to accept and receive and come to God was to come through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the **only** way belief in God has any saving effect.

That's why John says "**No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also**"(2:23). John is dealing with anyone who would teach about God but bypass what the Word says about Jesus. Religion that tries to patch man up with God without giving scriptural weight and place to Jesus Christ, God the Son, is labeled by John. And he doesn't have good or kind words for it. He specifically calls it the lie of antichrist.

Now, back to the anointing. The anointing teaches the saving grace and the divine lordship of Jesus Christ. That's the specific nature of the anointing. That's its purpose, its goal and objective. The anointing stakes a claim on our hearts. It confirms the reality of the Lordship of Jesus. It **sounds an alarm** whenever Jesus isn't central and glorified.

John's words shouldn't surprise us. They are only an echo of what Jesus had already specifically taught earlier:

John 16:13-14 - **“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. [14] He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”**

The Spirit confirms the truth of Jesus Christ to our hearts. He enables us to relish it - to embrace it - to abide in it.

People will always be attracted to God apart from Jesus Christ. There are very few **atheists**. We are all **deists** at heart. People are always willing to make room in this world for **religion**. We like to live and let live with our ideas about God and eternity. But the anointing is given to attract us specifically to Jesus Christ, to sort out the truth **about Him**, His Person and His cross.

Let me deal quickly with one other misconception from this passage: there are always a few who refuse to study and learn Christian truth in any disciplined way because John says, **“But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge [20]....[27].... But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything—and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you—abide in him.”**

"Pastor Don, I just let the Holy Spirit show me stuff. I don't believe in studying and learning. That's just man-made knowledge. The Bible says I don't need anybody to teach me. I just learn from the Holy Spirit."

Now, it should be plain from the context of those verses that John never intended to teach anything even remotely like that. If John really meant that the Holy Spirit would teach us everything we needed to know without any help from anyone else ***why would John bother to teach us that the Holy Spirit would teach us?*** Why not just let the Holy Spirit teach us? Why should we need John at all?

If the Holy Spirit does all the teaching about everything - and He does it all by Himself - why do we need John, or Paul, or Peter, or even Jesus' teachings in the gospels? For that matter, why do we need the Scriptures at all?

We need care here. What John means is seen from the context. There were people denying the truth about Jesus Christ. They were denying ***"that Jesus is the Christ"(22)***. But those who have received Jesus Christ, who have tasted of His goodness, who have been born of the Spirit from above, they know the truth about Jesus from the inside out. They've experienced Him for themselves.

Romans 8:15-16 - ***"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" [16] The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,"***

Without ever using the word, this is Paul's explanation of what the ***anointing*** is all about. He explains it in exactly the same terms as John. The natural man can't ***inwardly know*** this truth on his own. The wisdom of this world is foolishness where this is concerned. It takes the power of the Spirit in the inward man to turn the light on about Jesus Christ.

The anointing, as John sees it, is power to inwardly grasp the truth about Jesus Christ - not just to ***hear*** about it, but to ***taste*** the beauty and power of it. And also, very importantly, it's the ***moral power to reject any teaching or any influence that is incompatible with that truth about Jesus in my life.***

3) **THE ANOINTING TEACHES AND ENCOURAGES US TO ABIDE AND PERSEVERE IN CHRIST**

1 John 2:24-29 - “**Let** what you heard from the beginning **abide in you**. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. [25] And this is the promise that he made to us— eternal life. [26] I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. [27] But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything—and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you—**abide in him**. [28] And now, little children, **abide in him**, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. [29] If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.”

John cites *three ways to keep the anointing alive*:

A) WE ARE TO ABIDE IN THE WORD TO KEEP THE ANOINTING FRESH

1 John 2:24 - “Let **what you heard from the beginning** abide in you....”

Notice that ***you*** must do it. John sees no conflict between the ***anointing of the Spirit*** and the ***heeding of the Word***. Each keeps the other potent.

On to the ***second way*** we must keep the anointing of the Spirit alive:

B) WE ARE TO RESIST THE INCLINATION TO QUIT OR STALL IN OUR FOLLOWING AFTER CHRIST JESUS

1 John 2:24-27 - “Let what you heard from the beginning **abide** in you. If what you heard from the beginning **abides** in you, then you too will **abide** in the Son and in the Father. [25] And this is the promise that he made to us— eternal life. [26] I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. [27] But the anointing that you received from him **abides** in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything—and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you—**abide** in him.”

Do you see the repetition of one concept in John's words. There's only one repeated command - "**abide.**" No matter how much guilt you feel, no matter how many times you've failed, no matter how many hypocrites you've seen in the church, no matter how few Christians there are in your home, no matter how many Christian leaders fall, no matter how many of your best friends turn their back on the faith, **never mind.** Never, never, never yield to the thousand and one voices and inclinations that tell you to pack it in.

Even **temporarily.** Never get so mad at the church or anyone in it that you take it out on everyone by staying home. Don't cut off your nose to spite your face. Never do anything that puts the brakes on in any part of your Christian walk. Don't do it because one thing is for sure, the anointing of the Holy Spirit will never lead you in that direction. When you quit, you have parted company with the Spirit of God.

Finally, step three in keeping the anointing of the Spirit alive:

c) **VIEW ALL OF LIFE FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST**

1 John 2:28 - "And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame **at his coming.**"

Test your life by **rehearsing** the second coming of Jesus. True spirituality - the anointing - is **always comforted by the presence of Jesus.** Anything dark flees His presence. Jesus may not come back today, or for many years. But I can **put myself** before His second coming **today.**

Over four hundred years ago **John Calvin** wrote these timelessly wise words:

"Righteousness will boldly bear the presence of Christ. Ungodliness can only find comfort by forgetting Him by overdosing itself in the distractions of the flesh."

That's why whenever people are wrestling with guilt in their own lives they will **almost always quit coming to church, or will come less than they used to.** It may be anger, or failure, or busyness, or pride. But whatever it is, it's uncomfortable in the presence of

Jesus.

Remember, anointed people aren't perfect. But when they sin they bring it into the honest light of Jesus Christ. That's ***listening*** to the Holy Spirit. That's staying anointed.