

Many years ago, the late Dr. Henry Ironside was on the streets of Los Angeles when he came across a street preacher who was vigorously preaching to a large crowd around him, and as he listened, Dr. Ironside quickly realized that the preacher was sharing the views of a popular cult. As Dr. Ironside looked around the audience, he observed a man on the other side of the crowd listening closely to the preaching, and on occasion, he noticed that a smile would appear on the man's face.

Dr. Ironside felt sorry for the man being misled by this false preacher, so when the preacher was finished, Dr. Ironside made his way to the man, and, striking up a conversation, he asked, "Well, what did you think of what the preacher said?"

The man replied, "Well, he sure did tell us, didn't he?" "Yes, he surely did," Dr. Ironside agreed, "but what did you think of what he preached?"

With a smile, the man looked at Dr. Ironside and said, "I sure couldn't answer him, but all the time he was preaching there was something inside me saying, 'It's a lie, it's a lie, it's a lie.'"

If you recall, in his letter to the church, the Apostle John was confronting the lies of the Gnostics who had crept into the early church. The Gnostics claimed to have some new and improved knowledge from God – a special kind of knowledge the apostles did not teach and ordinary Christians did not have, and if people really wanted to know God and be right with Him – then they needed this special knowledge from these Gnostics.

Well, this special knowledge was nothing but deceptive and dangerous speculation about Jesus and the nature of man, so John revealed the truth and exposed them. John let his readers know that it was he and the other apostles who had actually been with Jesus. They heard His teaching and saw His miracles firsthand – they were eyewitnesses to His ministry, His death, and His resurrection – something these Gnostics could never claim, and John exposed them for what they truly were – they were false preachers and teachers and missionaries whom he called "*antichrists.*" That's a strong word from John, but it's an accurate word because they claimed to *represent* God, and yet they *rejected* the truth of His Son.

This morning, John is going to take this subject of truth a little further – explaining that we not only need to know the truth, but we also need to live in it. So, if you have your Bible, turn to **1 John 2** and we will pick up where we left off beginning with **verse 24**. John says,

²⁴ As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.

If you noticed in this passage, John uses the word “**abide**” three times – and let me say that when you see a word like this repeated several times in a passage – it’s being emphasized, it’s an important word, and if we are to understand what John is saying to us in this passage, then we first need to know what he means by this word “**abide**.”

In the Greek, it is the word “*meno*” which simply means to remain, to stay, or to reside, and when speaking about the gospel truth of Jesus Christ – and that’s the context here, in a roundabout way, John is saying something we often say when someone comes over to our house – “*Make yourself at home.*”

Okay, we all understand that’s merely an expression we use to be polite, but let’s think for a moment about what we are really saying. “*Make yourself at home.*” Are we telling a house guest that they have free reign to do anything in our home – that they can go through our closets and our dresser drawers? Are we suggesting they can hang up pictures of their family, rearrange the furniture, treat the house as if it was theirs, and walk around in their underwear? Boy, I hope not, but when it comes to the foundational gospel truth of Jesus Christ – the truth they **heard from the beginning** from the apostles, that’s precisely what John is telling Christians to do.

Let the gospel truth which you were taught and were born again make itself at home in your heart. Allow it to settle in and take over your life, let it abide in you, let it remain in you – for if you do, John says you will also **abide in the Son and in the Father**.

Now, what does John mean by that? In the context of abiding in the truth, John explains that the gospel is not just a set of doctrines we agree with – but rather they lead us into a real personal relationship with God through His Son. We just aren’t supposed to know the truth – we are to live it and let it live in us, for when we do, John says there is an outcome – we will experience the fullness of our relationship with God and His work in our lives.

In this passage, John is describing this reciprocal nature of our abiding relationship – in that to the degree that we give ourselves to God in knowing and obeying His word, to that same degree we will experience our relationship with Him.

Jesus spoke on this in **John 15**. Beginning with **verse 7**, He said,

⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. ⁹ Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. ¹⁰ If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

If someone wants to really experience God, both Jesus and John tell us how – let the gospel truth which you heard from the beginning abide in you. Be at home in the word and let the word be at home in you – in the sense that you obey it and apply it to every aspect of life. And to protect yourself from being led astray by false teaching – abide in the word – a word spoken by Jesus who promises **eternal life** to those who believe.

You know, when it comes to false teaching in our day and time, typically those who spew it seek to create confusion about the person of Jesus Christ and His finished work – thereby, causing doubt about the salvation and the eternal life He freely offers, but the gospel brings reassurance for it clearly teaches that our salvation is not based on our performance but rather by the grace of God through the finished work of Jesus Christ alone. For by grace, we have been saved through faith, it is the gift of God and not the result of works, so that no one can boast. Our works are merely the result of our salvation, not a means to it as some might teach.

Now, beginning with **verse 26**, John shifts his focus back to these antichrists and their false claims of having special knowledge from God, and he says,

²⁶These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. ²⁷As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

It seems that people tend to be attracted to those things which are described as “new” – suggesting that we think *new* is always *better* or *improved*, but that’s not the case especially when it comes to the gospel. When it comes to gospel truth – new is not better, in fact, John would say, that which you heard from the beginning is better and cannot be improved. Yes, it may be the simple truth, but it’s the gospel truth and we should abide in it – especially in the time in which we live.

For us, in this last hour, the Apostle Paul gave us this warning in **1 Timothy 4:1**. He said,

But the Spirit explicitly says that in the latter times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.

Last week we talked about those who depart from the church and the core beliefs of the faith, and John said this revealed that they were never really part of God's people to begin with. They were "with us" but they were really not "of us" – and so they left us, **and why?**

Because in this last hour, there will be those who say they have some new and improved insights from God. There will be those who suggest that they have received an updated revelation about Jesus, contrary to what the apostles taught – and in this last hour, there will be those who claim that God has divinely inspired other scripture outside of the Bible – but I am here to tell you that their teaching should be rejected outright as deceptive doctrines for they are trying to entice people away from the gospel truth.

If Satan, if these antichrists, if these false preachers and teachers and missionaries can create any confusion and doubt about the gospel – namely by twisting *who* Jesus is and *what* He has done – then like dominoes, people who accept it will fall.

Now **verse 27** needs some explaining, otherwise, **how do I justify my presence?** John says,

As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

Okay, we need to keep this in context because at first glance it seems that John is suggesting we don't need godly preachers and teachers to help us to understand God's Word, and if that's the case, **then why am I here?** For that matter, **why is John writing this very instructive letter to the church? Why does the Apostle Paul say that God has equipped some in the church to be preachers and teachers?** So, by comparing Scripture with Scripture, we can rightly conclude that John is not suggesting what he seems to be suggesting, and if that's the case – then, **what is John really telling us here?**

In a nutshell, John assumes that because they are abiding in the word and know the core truths of the gospel, and because the Holy Spirit dwells in them and guides them – they can test the teaching of men for themselves, and if you remember what I said last week, *“The best way to recognize a lie is to know the truth.”*

If someone says to you, *“the Lord told me this”* but what they say does not line up with the God’s Word – the Word given from the beginning, or they may quote a Bible verse but knowingly take it out of context which is often the case – then you know intuitively it’s not the Spirit of God who is giving them their insight.

According to John, believers already have what they need – they have the indwelling Holy Spirit and the tried-and-true gospel working in conjunction together to help them discern the truth from a lie. They have what they need – some just don’t know it.

During Superbowl XXXVII in 2003, FedEx ran a commercial that spoofed the movie “Castaway”. In the movie, Tom Hanks plays a FedEx worker whose company plane went down, leaving him stranded on a desert island for years. After his rescue, the FedEx commercial shows a dirty and disheveled Hanks returning to his old job.

He goes up to the door of a suburban home, package in hand, and rings the doorbell. When the lady comes to the door, he explains that he survived five years on a deserted island, and during that whole time he kept this package in order to deliver it to her. She gives a simple, “Thank you.”

But he is curious about what’s in the package that he has been protecting for all these years. He says, “If I may ask, what was in that package after all?”

She opens it and shows him the contents, saying, “Oh, nothing really. Just a satellite telephone, a global positioning device, a compass, a water purifier, and some seeds. Just silly stuff. Thank you again. You keep up the good work.”

If this FedEx worker had known, he could have used all that stuff when stranded on the island, and in the same way, as believers, we already have what we need – we have the indwelling Holy Spirit who guides us in conjunction with the God’s Word to help us discern the truth from a lie. We just need to abide, and in these next two verses John expounds on that from another perspective. Beginning with **verse 28**, John says,

²⁸ Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. ²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

Okay, this passage is going to require some explaining. Christians begin their walk by believing and trusting in Jesus Christ. We know that, **but then what?** Well, John gives us a straightforward answer – **abide in Him** until Jesus returns. Now, there's that word “**abide**” again – it's a favorite word of John's, and this time he presents it to us in the form of a command which implies we have something to do.

While we wait for the Lord's appearance – and I want to remind you that the next event in the prophetic timetable is the rapture of the church where Christ appears and meets us in the air – so, while we wait in anticipation, we are to **abide in Him** – meaning we are to remain in obedience to the Lord, we are to love one another just as He loved us, we are to be *in* the world but certainly not *of* the world, and we are to hold firmly to the truth of the gospel that was given to us at the beginning. We are to abide in Him – that's what John commands of us – it's a continual command, and then he gives us some motivation.

John says that when Jesus comes for us – if we are abiding in Him, we will **have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame**. Now, let me say that not all Bible scholars agree on the interpretation of this phrase but it seems that when Christ appears, one of two things will occur – either confidence or shame.

When speaking about **confidence**, I hope that Christ finds you and me persevering in the faith – abiding in Him – being loving and obedient and faithful – moment by moment, step by step, day by day until He comes. I hope He will say to you and me, “*Well done good and faithful servant.*” Those are the words I want to hear, and by abiding in Him now, we will have confidence and boldness and assurance when He appears, but the opposite is just as true – by failing to abide in Him, there will be those who **shrink away in shame**.

Now, here's the question – **who are those who will shrink away in shame? Is John referring to those who claim to be Christians but are really not – or is he talking to Christians?** Well, let me address the merits of both.

For quite some time, we have been talking about these false preachers and teachers and missionaries and their followers who have turned away from the church both physically and theologically, and it would make sense that when Jesus appears, for them there would be shame – and speaking of shame, Jesus said this in **Mark 8:38**,

“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

So, I can see where someone could make the case that John is talking about those who claim to be Christians but in reality, they are not and they will experience shame when Jesus appears. I can see the merits in that reasoning, but for the sake of argument, John could just as well be talking about Christians – and in the context of John’s passage – I think he is.

When it comes to Christians, we normally do not think of being ashamed at the appearance of Jesus – that idea seems foreign, but we can’t ignore that John began this passage with the words, **“Now, little children”** – speaking of *the born ones of God* – referring to fellow believers, and we must also remember that after Jesus appears, there will be the judgment seat of Christ where our faithfulness in this life will be evaluated.

Listen to what Paul said in **1 Corinthians 3**, beginning with **verse 10**.

¹⁰ According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. ¹¹ For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. ¹⁴ If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Later in **2 Corinthians 5**, beginning with **verse 9**, Paul says this,

⁹ Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

In both of these passages, Paul explains that there is a judgment for Christians, but it’s not a judgment for sin. It’s not about salvation – rather, it’s a judgment where the character of our actions and our motives will be evaluated by the Lord for eternal rewards.

After Jesus comes for His church, we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and He will judge our faithfulness in this life – more specifically He will evaluate the quality of our actions and our motives for eternal rewards, and for those actions and motives which Jesus considers worthy and valuable – there will be eternal rewards, but for those actions and motives that don't measure up – well, there will be the loss of rewards, and in that experience, maybe, at least for a moment, there is the possibility of shame for those Christians who were living worldly and unfruitful lives.

So, what we do, and why we do what we do in this life has some bearing in the life to come, and therefore John is saying,

“Listen my children, because we are born of God, because we know the gospel truth, because the Holy Spirit dwells in us, because Jesus is coming for us – abide in Him, stay with Him, remain in Him, be at home with Him and live your lives in such a way that people can see the family resemblance to your heavenly Father, and when Jesus appears – you will be approaching Him in confidence, instead of cowering before Him in regret and shame.”

Will it be confidence or cowering? Well, that's up to you, but John would say, “abide”.

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