

THE CHURCH IN CONFLICT

1 John 2:18-23

Intro: It has been a month since the last time I spoke on 1 John. In between then and now I brought three messages having to do with the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then last Sunday I spoke, as usually do, on Psalm 1. So probably it will worthwhile for me to review for all of us the reasons behind the Apostle John's writing of this epistle.

It was written as we learn from verse 3 in chapter 1, "that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

Notice from this statement that the Apostle John was writing about a two-fold fellowship. He said, first of all, "that ye may have fellowship with us," and second, that "our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

1 John 2:18-23

Following the warning in verses 15-17 of 1 John 2, the Apostle John went on to discuss the conflict between error and the truth as it was even then beginning to show itself in a special way among the people of God. Since the entrance of sin into the world, there has always been a conflict between what is true to the Word of God, and what is false. And it continues in the epistle through the first six verse of chapter 4. It was the Apostle John's purpose to prepare the people of God for a more intensive attack upon the truth, and what they needed to do to remain faithful to God as the opposi- tion to the truth of God increased.

Verse 18: The Apostle John is the only Biblical writer who mentions the Antichrist. or antichrists. See 2:18 (2x), 22, 4:3; 2 John 7. Anti- can and does mean both *against* Christ, and *in the place of* Christ. The point that the Apostle John seeks to be making here is that there will be a denial of all that the Scriptures teach about the Lord Jesus Christ, both as to Who He was (His Person), and what He did while He was here on earth, with a special attempt to discredit the teaching of Scripture that Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins, and that His was followed by His resu-rrection and His ascension back to the Father.

Verse 19: In these end times there may be many who will depart from the faith, bur we must not be confused by this. It is one of the ploys of the Devil that he will see to it that there are many who will depart from the faith and disassociate themselves from the church, but the Apostle John tells us why they leave: they did not really know the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation. They were "with" us, but they were not "of us," They may have been members of the local church, but they were not members of the body of Christ.

Verse 20: Previously I have called your attention to 1 John 2:27. This verse says essentially the same thing. Our "unction," which is the same as our "anointing," has to do with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Who has been given to us by our Lord. And the background for these verses is John, the Gospel, 14:16-17. And the Apostle Paul taught in Romans 8:9b, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

The Holy Spirit was given to believers on the Day of Pentecost, and now everyone who trusts Christ is permanently indwelt by the Spirit from the moment he, or she, is saved. As we read the Word, or hear the Word taught, it is always the Holy Spirit Who enables us to understand the truth of the Word of God. That is why it is so important for us to read the Word, and for us to be taught.

Verse 21: This is a very interesting verse. The group of believers to whom he was writing were well-taught, and it was their knowledge of the truth which the Apostle John was depending upon to convince them not to depart from the Word of God. The tragedy that we have to face in many churches today, is that there is practically no consistent teaching of the Word of God. In such cases people really don't know the difference between what is right and what is wrong, that is, between truth and error.

Verses 22 and 23 go together. The person who denies the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, cannot know the truth concerning God. And yet false teachers are continually claiming that while they reject Christ, they have the truth concerning God. The Apostle John makes it perfectly clear that if you deny one, either God or Christ, you are denying both. Nobody can be right about God who is wrong about Christ.

When the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3, he said this in 2 Timothy 3:14-15:

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;

15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

I call your attention to Paul's words, "knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Who had been Timothy's teachers before he met the Apostle Paul?

They were two ladies – his grandmother and his mother. Paul knew what they had taught Timothy, and he told Timothy to continue in what these two godly women had taught him. How blessed are those who are raised in a home where parents and/or grandparents know the Lord! And how blessed are those who being saved, have been guided by the Lord to a church where they are going to be taught the Word of God.

So the point is this: concentrate on learning the truth of the Word of God, be sure of your teachers, and then never depart from the firm foundation upon which your faith rests.