

THE CONTINUING NEED TO ABIDE

1 John 2:24-29

Intro: The Apostle John, writing toward the end of the first century, and, as I have mentioned to you many times, was concerned about the fellowship of the people of God with each other *and* with the Members of the Godhead. In 1 John 1:4 he mentioned particularly “fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. So there is both a human aspect to this fellowship and a divine aspect.

The first time we find the word “fellowship” in the NT is in Acts 2:42 where we read of the blessing that was upon the early Church, and which undoubtedly led to the amazing spread of the Gospel in those days, and the power that was experienced upon the people of God in those early days. This is what we read in Acts 2:42:

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

The teaching, or doctrine, of the apostles was foundational. The truth of God was very important in the early church, and this emphasis is maintained throughout the epistles of the NT. Their fellowship with each other, the relationship that those early Christians had with each other, was what made the early church so strong. Fellowship speaks of the way they ministered to each other, and the way also in which the Lord ministered to them.

The next reference we have to “fellowship” in the NT is in 1 Corinthians 1:9 where we read, “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” But at that time it was not apparent in Corinth that the believers were walking in fellowship with the Lord. They had many problems, and their fellowship with each other and with the Lord were what had been affected in the wrong way. Fellowship requires that we believe the truth and walk in the truth, and have a loving relationship with each other in the Church. And that is what the Apostle John has been emphasizing up to at least the fifteenth verse of 1 John 2.

When we get to heaven we will all enjoy perfect fellowship with the members of the Godhead, and with all believers. But as long as we are living in this world, the maintaining and strengthening of our fellowship needs to be of the greatest concern for all of us. We have to recognize that there will always be a difference, a great difference, between the Church and the world. From time to time throughout the history of the

Church there have been various attempts to bring the world and the Church together in some kind of fellowship. But it never has worked, and it never will work! It is like mixing oil and water, or light and darkness. The Church and the world really have nothing in common. The same was true of Israel in the OT. Whenever there was an attempt to mix the world's religious in with the true worship of God, it was Israel that suffered. And so the same is true of the Church today. It is God's declared will that the Church is to remain distinctly different.

Now this is the reason for the warning the Apostle John issued in 1 John 2:15 through 17. And this sounds very much like what Paul wrote to the church at Rome in Romans 12:1 and 2, and what he wrote also to the church at Corinth in 2 Corinthians 6:14 on down through the first verse of 1 Corinthians 7:1. These are all passages which need to be called to the attention of the Church today. From the time that the Devil appeared to Eve in the Garden of Eden throughout the Bible, it is clear that the Church is not going to change the world, but our mission is that through the preaching of the Gospel God will call people out of the world, transform their lives, and bring them into the family of God.

But the problem is, as Genesis 3 teaches us, our enemy is aggressive. He will not leave the people of God alone. Whenever a person is saved, they soon learn that they have to contend with the world, the flesh, and the Devil. No child of God can escape the conflict. The Devil has many devices which are explained to us in Scripture. One of them is to infiltrate the Church. And that had happened to the Church in the latter part of the first century when the Apostle John wrote his first epistle. And the Apostle John called attention to this in the latter part of 1 John 2. Some day a person whom the Apostle John called "the Antichrist" is going to appear. He is called by other names, such as "the Man of Sin," or "the false prophet," or "the Son of perdition." But it will be in the Tribulation Period when he will appear. But the Apostle John warned us that "even now are there many antichrists" (1 John 2:18). And I have brought out to you that anti-christ has two meanings. It can mean someone who falsely professes to be the Christ, the Messiah, or it can mean someone who is openly opposed to Christ. And this latter point seems to have been the problem when the Apostle John wrote his epistle.

Now, in opposing those of us who are the people of God, antichrists attack the Person of Christ, and in so doing they have to attack the Word of God. Now apparently in the Apostle John's day there had been a large

group of people who had identified themselves with the Church, and perhaps sincerely so on their part, but as time went on it became apparent that they were not really saved. And so the Apostle John described them in 1 John 2:19. (Read.) But then, as we saw last week in verses 20 through 23 we have a real, God-given safeguard against the forces of evil.

The first in verse 20 is “the unction” which every believer has. He is the Holy Spirit with Whom we have been anointed, and Who came to indwell us at the very moment we were saved. He is our Teacher as we learn in John 14, 15, and 16.

The second is that God has given us the truth, His Word, the Bible. To be well taught in the truths of Scripture is a real safeguard, really the only safeguard against error. We don’t have the time to study all of the anti-Christian teaching that comes along, but if we know the truth, then we are in a position to recognize error when we hear it. The person who denies the Biblical teaching about Christ in any way, is a liar. And the Apostle John made it very clear that if a person is wrong about Christ, he cannot possibly be right about God. They can’t be wrong about Christ or God, and still be right about the other. To deny what the Bible teaches about Christ, is to reject all of the teaching of the Bible. A person cannot be wrong about Christ and be right about God.

But now the point of this part of the epistle to John is to show us that the Apostle John was deeply concerned about what to advise people to do when they are exposed to antiChrist teaching. And this brings us to verse 24. And it can all be summed up in one word, the word *abide*.

It is used three times in verse 24, but it is translated, unfortunately, with three different words: abide, remain, and continue.

Then we have it again in verse 27, two times.

Finally, we see it again in verse 28.

Now let us go back to verse 24 to learn what the Apostle John is saying about how to protect ourselves in the light of attacks that we will face against our Lord, and against the Word of God.

All during the time that we have been saved, we have been taught the truth. Yesterday at the service for our dear Ruth McCaleb, one of her

daughters spoke about how her mother had taught her John 3:16. And that verse was still in her memory. As she spoke to us yesterday, that verse was abiding in her.

I never knew any of my grandparents, but there was an older lady in our church in Tacoma who was like a mother to my mother, and we kids learned to call her “Grandma.” She told me when I was just a child that if I would learn John 3:16, she would give me a New Testament. I started right away to work on John 3:16, and soon I was able to quote it to her, and she gave me a little NT very much like the Gideons have given out. That was the first verse of the Bible that I had memorized. And this morning it is still in me.

I want you to stop and think about the truths of Scripture that you know, Bible stories from the OT and the NT that you have learned. Think about how the Gospel was impressed upon your heart. Think of Scriptures you have learned just by reading them over and over, or hearing them read by your parents. All through our lives we have been learning the truth, and those truths are still with you today. Maybe in reading your Bible this morning some truth was impressed upon you, and now it is in you. I can think back to my Seminary days when I was taught some of the doctrines of Scripture that I had not understood before, and what a blessing they were to me. And in the years that have followed, I have been teaching them to others.

I hope you understand what I am saying. The truths of the Word of God have come to all of us in many different ways – by reading, or hearing others read it or explain it. We have learned a lot about God, and about our Lord Jesus Christ, and about the Holy Spirit. And about many other things. The best thing that we can do for our children is to make sure that they are hearing the Word.

Now it is all in our hearts. It is abiding in us. But now someone comes along and tries to get me to reject some things that I have learned from the Bible, perhaps something different about the Gospel, or about Christ. What am I to do with what I have learned? Shall I forget the truth I have known, or change my ideas to make room for some teaching that has come along, but which is not in the Bible? Our answer is in verses 24 and 25. What do they say? (Read verses 24 and 25.)

Verse 25 indicates that most often it is the Gospel that false teachers want

to change in some way. But I know that I have eternal life, and that I have eternal life in Christ. None of these teachers who come along can give me more than I have in Christ.

So instead of starting to take things out, or modifying what I have learned about Christ or other truths that I have learned from the Bible, I am going to let that abide in me, stay where they are so that I can continue to find strength and blessing from the Word and from the Lord, and built upon the foundation that I already have in my heart. The Apostle Paul said along this line in 1 Corinthians 3:10-11:

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now read verse 26 in our text. Having received the truth of God's Word, our minds and hearts should stand firmly against anyone who tries to tamper with the teaching of Scripture.

But then the Apostle John gives another very valuable piece of advice in verse 27.

Not only do we need to stand firmly upon the truth that we have learned from God's Word, but we need to keep learning as the Spirit of God continues to teach us. Regardless of how much we know of the Word of God, there is always more that we need to learn. The truth that we already know needs to become clearer and dearer to us. The Holy Spirit is with us, and He is very concerned that we stay within the limits of the Word of God. He may use godly people to give us further understanding of the Word, but He is never going to have any part with a person who will in any way draw us away from the Word of God, or change what is written in our Bibles.

We called our son, Dwight, Jr. this week to wish him a happy birthday, and he told me that his Pastor had read a statement to the elders of his church from a member of the faculty of one of our largest evangelical seminaries, who said that there have been so many manuscripts found of the Bible that we can no longer be sure of what is authoritative in the Bible, and what is not. The elders of his church were amazed. My

response to that is one word: “antichrist.”

The last two verses of 1 John 2 are an exhortation and a statement of truth which we all need. “Abide in Him” speaks of sticking by what the Word of God teaches us about God, and about Christ so that we won’t be ashamed before the Lord when He comes. The proof of the truth God has revealed, and which we believe, with special reference again to the Gospel, is that knowing that God is righteous, and that Christ is righteous, then we can be sure that anyone who is born of Him, or Them, is righteous. False teachers cannot add anything, or take away anything, that we have in Christ. So let’s not give them a hearing because they cannot improve upon Christ, or upon the Gospel, in any way.

What we need to do is to abide by the truth of God’s Word and what it teaches about our Lord Jesus Christ, and continually be adding to our understanding of the truth under the ministry of God, the Holy Spirit.