

The Believer and the Truth

1 John 2:18-24

by Dr. Wayne Barber

We have seen so far *The Believer and Sin*, *The Believer and Obedience*, *The Believer and His Relationships*, and *The Believer in the World*. Now we are going to look at *The Believer and Truth*. Remember that John is writing to combat the Gnostic heresy and all of the book now is a contrast: these are believers, these are not. Sometimes the waters get a little muddy when you realize that a Christian can sin and can step over here and appear to be not a believer and still at the same time be a believer. But what we are trying to show you is, John is saying, “Look, these are and these aren’t.”

And it is a series of contrasts through the whole book. The Gnostics had gotten into the church and had confused so many of them. Many had even lost their joy over what was going on. You know, there are countless warnings that God has given to us in His Word about false teachers who will discredit Christ and will twist His Word to mean what they want it to mean.

Peter in 2 Peter 2 warns that these false teachers will secretly introduce destructive heresies. In other words, they will bring their error in – that which does not honor Christ but points to themselves, that which does not honor the Word – and they will put it right alongside the truth. Then when you are not looking, they pick up their error and make you think that error is what God is saying.

Jude warns us that these false teachers will turn the grace of God into licentiousness. What does that mean? It means they will take God’s wonderful favor and grace and make it look as if it is license to where you can live like you want to live, that Jesus doesn’t require you to live a certain way.

Paul warns us that they will come in on us like savage wolves when the teaching is not prevalent. They will come in. And the word “savage” means heavy teaching, burdensome teaching. They will try to add law to grace.

So we are warned all through the New Testament that these false teachers are around. They are everywhere and we are going to have to deal with that fact. They are, simply put, forerunners to the epitome of all of them that will come on the scene one day; the one John calls the antichrist. He will one day come on the scene in the last of this age.

Now, I want you to look at verse 18: “Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.” Now he uses the term “children.” It is the word *paidion*, and it gives us the idea a child is able to learn something. He is open to what you have to say to him. And he is addressing these Christians there in Asia Minor and saying, “Listen, I know you can learn. Let me teach you. I want to tell you something. It is the last hour.”

There are two words for last and sometimes we get a little confused on it. There is *husteron*, a word that means the very last of the last, but that is not the word used here. Then there is the word that is used here that means the last, it is simply referring to the last days. Hebrews 1:1 says that these last days began when Jesus came to this earth the first time. It says, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last [and the word is *eschatos*] days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.” So again he speaks of the last days that he was living in at that time.

Sometimes you get confused. How could John be living in the last days? I thought we are living in the last days? Well, the last days began when Jesus came to this earth the first time. There is another word which means the very last of the last days and that is not the word he is using here. One day on the last of the last days there will be a man to come on the scene and that man will certainly be called the antichrist. He will be against everything Christ stands for.

So John says, “Just as you have heard,” and that tells us that evidently he has taught us about this before. He hadn’t written about it because the only time the word antichrist is used is in John’s epistles. Paul calls him something else, the son of lawlessness, the son of destruction. But what John calls him is the antichrist. So by using the term antichrist evidently John had spoken to them about this man before. And he warns them of his coming: “Just as you have heard before.” John says that even though he will come on the scene one day, he says the problem is not the fact that he is coming, the problem is we have many of them on the scene already. It is funny, he takes the idea of the deceiving man, the false teacher, these people who get in amongst us and he turns it to where they are pictures of the antichrist to come.

Now the term antichrist comes from two words. One word means in lieu of and the other word means against. Now, if you put those together you have a picture of what he is like. The term “in lieu of” has the idea that when he comes on the scene or when many antichrists come on the scene, they appear to be for Christ but, in reality, are against Him. This is how they can deceive so easily. You know, Jesus seems to allude to that in Matthew 7:21-23 when He mentions the miracle workers of that day.

And folks, I want to tell you something, just because a person mentions Christ and just because it looks like a person is in favor of Christ, notice what his ministry points to. Does his ministry point to himself or does his ministry point to Jesus? Look out. Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’

will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'"

We live in America and that is our problem. We think that everything supernatural is of God. We don't seem to understand when Moses did the miracles in the Old Testament somebody copied every one of them. And we need to realize that the enemy has that power. And just because a person comes on and mentions Jesus and just because he can do miracles does not in fact mean that he is for Christ or that he stands for everything Christ stands for. He may be leading you down the path of destruction. The word antichrist means "in lieu of Christ". They will come on as if they are for Him but in reality they are against Him. And this is why John is warning them. We are so easily deceived by these kind of people. They are good at what they do.

Verse 19 shows again that these antichrists were among those of the disciples. It says in Verse 19, "they went out from us." Now, who is the "us" here? John has used the term "we" and "us" to refer to the apostles. They had to deal with it themselves. "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us."

You know, I think one of the ones that John probably had on his mind that he had to deal with was a man by the name of Judas. Judas deceived everybody but God. There are those who may join the church, participate in religious activities, but never are for Christ and in reality when you boil it down, are against Him. But they come on as if they are for Him. There will come a time that they will depart from the believers. You know, Judas finally separated himself from those who loved Christ. There will come a time they will depart.

Now, don't misunderstand. I don't mean they will leave our church and go join another. You know, for years I have heard preachers say, "If they had been of us, they wouldn't have departed from us," as if their church is the only church around. Folks, I hope you know there are a lot of good churches. If somebody leaves here and goes there, so be it. Bless God. I hope that God will use them wherever they are.

So when somebody sees things a different way and leaves, that doesn't mean they are against Christ. That is not what we are talking about. What John is talking about is they walk away from the doctrine of Christ. They walk away from any semblance of willingness to obey Christ. They will not associate with you in any way. When the chips are down and when obedience is required, they will separate themselves. Judas did separate himself: "For if they had been of us, they would have remained with us."

The term "with" there is the word *meta* and it has the idea and really gets the picture. You know, if something comes out of, if something is inside something. Let's say I have something in my pocket. My tie is in my pocket. If I wanted to use the term *ek* and I took my tie out of my pocket, something is missing out of my pocket and

they are very upset because it was a part of them. Now, my tie can be with my pocket but not actually be a part of it. Do you understand? If I had a pen, I could hook it right here and I could say, "My pen is with my pocket," but when you take it away from it you don't take it out of it because it was never a part of it. That is the term he uses here. They were never with us.

You see, they were with us, yes, in body, but they were never a part of us. And so, therefore, now they have left us, they no longer remain with us. So what you watch out for is when the chips are down, you know, when pressure is on because John seems to indicate some of this pressure with all the deception that is there, when a false teacher walks in and you see people follow him out and they don't stay and honor Christ in their life, then you automatically know that there is something wrong in their hearts.

I have always wondered how Christians can be so easily deceived. I am not so sure the people being deceived are really Christians. From what John says, if you have truly bowed before Jesus Christ, have become a part of Him, then there is something different about you and we are going to talk about it in a minute and I don't believe you can deceive a person who is surrendered and obedient to Jesus Christ. That person can catch it that fast. He knows when you are leading him away from who the Truth and what the truth really is.

Well, it says, "But they went out, in order that it might be shown that they are not of us." The words, "that it might be shown" is the word *phaneroo*, and it is the idea that if you have people among you and you honor Jesus Christ, if you keep honoring Him and keep honoring His Word, they will either leave or if they don't, God will put them on display and expose every one of them before the time is over with. You watch. Mark my word. If they leave for that reason, it shows that they are not of the Truth.

Well, as I have said, we have seen the believer in sin, obedience, the believer in relationships, the believer and the world and now, three things about the believer and truth. Knowing that antichrists, false teachers, deceivers are with us – not a part of us, with us – knowing that they are here, we need to show three things that the believer relates to truth.

First of all, in verse 20, the believer has an anointing which gives him the ability to discern truth. He has an anointing upon him: "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know." Now, that is the New American Standard; the literal reads better: "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things."

Now in previous studies we looked at two types of knowledge. One type of knowledge is what you must learn, what you must give your time and attention to, what God will teach you as a result of it, what you must experience. The other kind of knowledge is that intuitive, perceived, discerning knowledge that comes with the package. And that is the word he is using here. John is not saying, "Hey, you don't have to learn anything. Don't be disciplined. You got saved. You know everything." No, no, no. He means you have the ability to intuitively discern things that you didn't have before. But in the meantime you need to keep on growing and learning about the Word and the things of the Christian life. But you have something you didn't have

before, something that gives you the ability to discern truth.

Now what is this anointing? It is the Holy Spirit of God that has been given to us. You see, the moment a person becomes a believer, the Holy Spirit moves into his life. The term “anointing” is the word *chrisma*. This is derived from the word *chrío*, which means to anoint. Now *chrisma*, the *ma* at the end of that word means the result of that anointing. In other words, you live in the result of this anointing, something God has done to you life.

The word *chrío* means to anoint. When you take the Old Testament and put it into the Greek, you call that the Septuagint and if you go back in the Old Testament, that word *chrío* has the idea of when you would consecrate somebody to an office, like you anoint a priest, you anoint a king. 1 Samuel 10:1 says, “Then Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it on his head, kissed him and said, ‘Has not the Lord anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?’” 1 Samuel 15:1, “Then Samuel said to Saul, ‘The Lord sent me to anoint you as king over His people, over Israel.’” And that was always done with oil, every time you see it in the Old Testament. 2 Samuel 2:4, “Then the men of Judah came and they anointed David king over the house of Judah.” So, it was an anointing, but it was an anointing with oil in the Old Testament. And it was a consecration, it was a setting apart, it was to officially determine a position that God had raised a person to.

But in the New Testament it doesn’t mean that. It is not an anointing with oil. It is an anointing with the Holy Spirit of God, the oil being a picture of that in the Old Testament. So when you come to the New Testament, don’t think that when somebody gets saved or when somebody is set apart to do whatever, you have to put oil on him. All you are going to do is make him greasy! The Holy Spirit is what anoints a person in the New Testament. Luke 4:18, Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden.”

Now, the Lord anointed Him, but no oil. If you will look in Acts 10:38 Peter determines what it was. He says, “You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil.” How did He anoint Him? With the Holy Spirit and with power.

So this anointing that is upon us, this that we have to be able to discern truth, is the person who lives in our life. We have the Holy Spirit of God. He says this anointing is from the Holy One, and from the context it cannot be anything else but God the Father and God the Son. When you receive Jesus into your life, He gives you the anointing of the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit of God. And because of this anointing, which means the Holy Spirit lives in us, then now we can perceive and discern all things.

This is why I am saying to you, I am not sure that a lot of these people being deceived are truly believers because the Holy Spirit of God lives in us to give us that discernment. The only way they are being deceived is that they are not adhering to

God's Word and not obeying Him on a daily basis would be the only reason I could think of.

Verse 21 gives us the context of what they can perceive, what they can discern. "I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth." John tells his audience that because they had His anointing and knew the truth, that is why he is writing to them. He says, "I am in no way insinuating you don't know. I am not embarrassing you. I am not belittling you. I am writing this because you do know. I want you to know that I know that you know." And the word there means I am not trying to mislead you in any way. There is no lie in the truth. And a believer knows that. And, of course, the truth that the context is talking about is the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ being God's Son and what He came to this earth to do. So the believer knows the truth because of the discerning power of the Holy Spirit in him.

You know, in seminaries what is happening today, it was going on when I was there, they try to separate the historical Christ from the Christ of your faith, as if they are two different things. This is what was really confusing to me when I went to school and I was thinking, what are you talking about? The same historical Christ we talk about is the same Christ that comes to live in our hearts. But you have to be real careful, folks. When you have the Holy Spirit living in you, He gives you discernment.

Years ago I was preaching in the fastest growing, biggest sign gift church in West Texas. I preached the whole time I was there on the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the fact that when you receive Him you get everything you will ever get. On Saturday morning I told them to quit chasing after experiences, the Holy Spirit already was in their life, the Holy Spirit was the Spirit of Christ that came to live in them when they got saved. Saturday morning at 9:00 there were almost 500 people in the auditorium and at 11:00 when I left, they gave me a standing ovation when I walked out of the church! A lady ran me down and she said, "Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Something in my spirit told me that what I was getting into was wrong, but I just didn't have the truth to listen to."

I want to tell you something, folks, what is going on in a lot of these so-called revivals, you had better watch it like a hawk. It is not built around Christ. It is built around the Holy Spirit. Look out. Look out. Anybody that takes away from who Jesus is and from what He came to do is automatically a heretic. Remember that until the day you die. That is what John is saying.

I want to tell you something, friend, you don't insult the Holy Spirit by saying what I just said. The Holy Spirit said, "When I come, I will not speak of myself. I will only speak of Him." That is what He came for. There is more confusion in America. And I will tell you what; a lot of these people are nothing more than antichrists. Hear me loud and clear. They can do it well, they can woo you and wow you, but look who they are leading you to. And if it does not lead you to Jesus, friend, that is the forerunner of the one who will come and deceive the whole world one day called the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, the antichrist. But thank God we have the Holy Spirit of God that lets us know that something is wrong here. You may not have it all figured out, but you know something is wrong.

That reminds me of a story about the fellow that his wife called him and said, "Something is wrong with the car." And he said, "What is wrong with it?" She said, "There is water in the carburetor." He said, "Honey, you don't have a clue what a carburetor is." She said, "Trust me. There is water in the carburetor." He said, "Tell me where it is on the car?" She said, "Trust me. There is water in the carburetor." "Where is the car?" She said, "It is in the swimming pool."

And the reason I bring that up is because this discernment works that way. You might not know all the different pieces here, but something inside of you says you can discern and perceive all things. God didn't leave you as an orphan. God let you know what Truth is all about. You may not be able to argue it with anybody. They may be able to debate you to make you look foolish. But in your spirit you know that is wrong. We have an anointing from the Holy One.

Second, because of this anointing the believer must examine what people say about Christ. And when it doesn't match up to what God says, then he knows that person is a liar. Verses 22-23: "Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also."

Now John says "the one who denies," and he uses a verb tense here to make sure you understand. Deny here is in the present tense – continually, consistently denies that Jesus is the Christ. I imagine every one of us at some point or another in our life has denied Him either by what we have said or what we have done somehow. Peter did. But he didn't consistently live that way. Any of us can have a bad day and perhaps in a stupid moment say something that we are sorry for, but what John says is this person consistently, by what he says and by what he does, denies Jesus is the Christ.

Here come the Gnostics again. Remember what he is doing now. Don't ever divorce that from 1 John. Everything he is saying here is combating what they are having to put up with constantly by these people leading them astray, which is in Verse 26, a little ahead of us. The word for Christ here is the word *Christos*, which means the anointed one. They deny that Jesus is the Christ. You see, they said Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary because God would never inhabit a human body. And John says, "Buddy, if anybody ever denies that Jesus was the God-man, the anointed one, the Messiah, the promised one, the one who came to take our sin away, that person is a liar." John says that the one who denies the Father and the Son is the antichrist. This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

You have to understand something here. Jesus and the Father are one. On a plane going to Atlanta not long ago, a lady was sitting beside me. She was a private detective, of all things! And I was real interested in that. I would love to be a private detective. I just think it would be so much fun. I have a curiosity. I would love to follow people around and figure out what they are doing. I was talking with her for a little while and then she said, "What do you do?" And I told her I was a pastor. She said, "Oh, good. I've got some questions." I said, "Wonderful. Maybe I will have an answer

or two.”

She said, “The thing that bugs me is you have God but then you have Jesus. Jesus gets in my way. There is one God.” I said, “Oh, that is a great question. But the thing you have overlooked is that Jesus is God.” “What?” “You see, it is God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. One God in three persons.” Then I showed her in Colossians where it says that Jesus is the fulness of the Godhead bodily. I said, “This is all of God manifested though to where we can see Him as He came to this earth in human flesh.” We landed quicker than I wish we had landed. I have to believe the fact that some sow, some water and some give the increase. I have to believe that somebody is going to come along and pick up from there. But I was talking a mile a minute trying to get in as much as I could before we had to get off that plane.

You see, if you deny the Son, you have just denied the Father. Think of the religions of this world that do that today. “Oh, we believe in God, but we don’t honor Jesus.” You know, this is what John is saying. If you ever deny that Jesus is God’s Son, the Christ, the anointed one, the one who came for the express purpose of taking our sins away, of dying on the cross, resurrecting on the third day, you have just denied the Father because Jesus and the Father are one.

That’s what it says in John 10:30, “I and the Father are one.” In John 14:9 when they asked Jesus, “Show us the Father.” He said, “Have I been so long with you and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father. How do you say, show us the Father?” The Gnostics denied Jesus. They would hang on to the truth about God but not Jesus.

Anyone who denies Jesus denies the Father, so John adds in Verse 23, “Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.” You see, this has been some of the confusion. People think that you get parts of the Godhead at different times. You get saved and you get Jesus. Later on you get the Father. And then if you are real fortunate, you get baptized in the Spirit and you get the Spirit.

I am going to say it one more time. Folks, there is one God. You can’t separate them. You get Jesus, you get the Father and the Spirit. You get the Spirit, you get Jesus and the Father. I mean, they are all together. They go together. They are in the same package. You can’t unwrap them and put them in different groups. So, the Gnostics’ doctrines are being whittled away because of what John is saying. The antichrist denied that Jesus is God and thereby they denied the Father.

What John is saying is, first of all, you Christians, thank God because you have truth in you. You have an anointing and you have the ability to discern what is error and what is right. And it all, second, has to do with what people say about Christ. That is the key. Listen to what they say about Christ, not just what they say but how they live in response to Him. If there is no obedience, if there is no humility, if there is no surrender, look out. You have just put your finger right on the problem.

Then third, the believer remains in the truth that he has received. Verse 24 says, “As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning.” I think this

goes back to what John has been saying: I told you once. I have written my gospel and nothing has changed. Now, if you have received Christ and that which you have heard from us, you remain in it. You continue to remain in it. “If what you heard from the beginning abides in you [and it will if you are a believer], you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.” They all go together.

If you received the truth which pointed you to Jesus who is the embodiment of truth and you received Him into your life, then you are not going to turn away from the Word and you are not going to turn away from Him because the truth is going to remain in you. Also, He will remain in you and you will remain in Him. That is what he is talking about.

That is why I go back to what I said originally. How many people that are being deceived these days have never received the truth to start with? Maybe some have, I know that. But I am just wondering if John is not trying to drive another nail that I had never thought about. A lot of people are deceived because they never were enlightened and they are perfect targets for that because they have never received the truth, never bowed and do not seek to remain in the Lord Jesus Christ. “That which you have heard from the beginning”, to me, is what John talks about in the first part of the book.

Well, we will remain in that truth. And then verse 25 says here is the result of that. Here is the person. This is what we have to be thankful for today. If we are remaining in Him and His truth remains in us – and it will if you are truly saved – then in verse 25, “And this is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.”

Now I want you to understand something. Eternal life is not just quantity but it is also quality. The quality of life that we have day by day is something that we ought to be thankful for from now on. We have received Jesus. He has put His Spirit within us. He has given us the ability to discern when people are trying to lead us astray. Anything they say or how they treat Jesus is the whole clue. And not only that, when we remain with that truth and don't turn from the apostles' doctrine and we continue to remain in Him, we experience the quality of life that is more abundant than we could ever express to anyone.

Truth is important to us, folks. I had a person say to me one day, “Don't tell me what the language says. I really don't care. I know what I have experienced.” That is true of so many in America today. You get a person to have an experience and they will walk away from truth so fast it will make your head swim. They never stop to realize that your experience doesn't back up the Word of God, but the Word of God better back up your experience. That is the key.

And so what John says is, use what you have. Use what you have. You know enough. You have the Holy Spirit. These people have come in to deceive you. Stand where you are. Remain in what you know. Don't walk away from our teaching. And not only will you be able to discern the ones that are in error but you will live a quality of life that you never thought possible daily.

1VVBarber(J-109)0208 The Believer and the Truth