

An Important Warning

1 John 2:15-27

September 5, 2010

Last week we looked as John wrote that we should walk in the light instead of in the darkness. He identified walking in the light with loving each other. This week, John moves on to a couple of warnings. The first warning is that we do not love the **world** or the things in it. Look how John defines the things in the world, “*the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does.*” (v.16) If we love the world, if we love the ways the world does things, if our priorities are set by the society around us rather than by the word of God, then God’s love is not in us. Love of the world and the things in the world leads to desiring things we ought not desire and to pride. These things do not come from God.

This was the problem with Lot’s wife. Even as God called her and her family out of the sin and depravity around them, seeking to save them from the death that sin always brings, she looked back longingly. She wanted to return to the sin from which she was being saved instead of moving into the future to which God was taking her.

This warning against loving the world is the negative of the instruction at which we looked last week to love one another. We are to avoid the cravings of the sinful man, the impure desires and lusts that pull us away from pure and right relationships with God and each other. In calling us to this, John reminds us of God’s promise. “*The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*” (v.17)

Again, having the love of God in us is expressed in our **obedience** to Him. We obey Him, not out of duty, but because we love Him and delight in His love for us. As He gives us eternal life and places a new heart within us, we find ourselves delighted with Him and not with the things of the world. So, John warns us against loving the world and the things we find here. We should love God.

This brings us to the second warning. The second warning is to hold fast to the **truth** and not follow false teachings. Calling the readers “dear children” again, John tells us that the end is near. We are in the last hour. Whether Christ comes in glory this afternoon, or not for another four hundred years, we have entered into the last hour. It is the age of God’s growing Kingdom in the world as He rules in His church. He will continue to deal with His people and the world through the church until Jesus descends with the clouds and begins His physical reign on earth for 1000 years. This is what lies ahead and we are in the last stage of history before these events take place.

John tells us that we know we are near the end because of the emergence of false teachers he calls “antichrists.” Now, many of us like to read Revelation and we are familiar with the beast out of the earth who exercised the authority the beast from the sea had received from the dragon. This beast from the earth is the one who will control the world, force people to worship the first beast, and who will be identified by the number 666. The church has long identified the beast from the earth with someone we call the Antichrist.

Yet John says that rather than look and watch for the beast from the earth, we need to be concerned with

the **antichrists** who are already here and in our midst. Indeed, it is the presence of these people who seem to be part of the church but instead are opposed to the church's Master that signals the end. The fact they are here tells us we are in the last hour.

John went on to say, "*They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us.*" (v.19) These antichrists were from congregations connected to John. By saying that, John implies they sat under his teaching. At some point they agreed to submit to his authority and teaching. They should know the truth, but they didn't belong to John's churches as shown by the fact they left and started teaching lies. They did know the truth, but they preferred their own way and to live in disobedience to God. This is why they are called "antichrists." Jesus said that He only did what the Father told Him to do. He lived a life of perfect obedience. He loved the Father and the Father's will more than anything else. In the same way, anybody who loves the world and the things in the world may attend church and participate in what the church is doing, but they have no real part in the church. Churches around this country are filled with people whose names are on the rolls, but who do not really belong to the church because they do not share the church's priorities, mission, or love.

More than that, there are preachers and those who lead churches all around this country who love money more than holiness and power over their congregations more than service to Christ. There are those who are so given to the sins and pleasures of this world that they distort and twist the scriptures so they can pretend that God blesses their sin. God doesn't bless sin and

depravity—anybody's—God calls us out of it! Instead of looking for teachers who make us feel good about ourselves and tell us why the Bible doesn't really condemn us, we need to find teachers who teach the need for holiness and God's command to rightly order our **lives** according to His will and word.

John was convinced his readers would follow the truth. False teachers may have gone out from his churches, but he said the people to whom he was writing weren't going to be duped by them. We have talked a lot recently about how those who are God's are held in His hand and there is nothing that can take them away from Him. Here we learn that this is not only true about our eternal destiny, it is also true of our hearts and minds. If we have an anointing from the Holy One then we know the **truth**. God's truth, His word and Jesus' character, resonate within us because we are now filled with their Author. John did not write to the churches to tell them the truth but to remind them of it. He was not giving them new information. He was encouraging them to hold fast and firm to the truth they already knew and had believed. If they held firm to what they had learned from the beginning, then they would not be duped by the lies the false teachers were spreading.

We need to be careful here. Many people read this and conclude that they do not need to learn anything, that Bible Study and gathering with the body of Christ is not necessary because of this anointing. This is not John's point. It is not the case that as long as we say we are anointed that we are okay. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would guide His people into truth. That truth, however, is always defined by Jesus' life and God's word. The

Spirit will never lead us to be disobedient to God's will as revealed in the **Bible**. Indeed, as disobedient as I sometimes am, I have found myself desiring to do things only to find out later that the Bible commands them. This is what John means. The Holy Spirit will raise obedience in us to God's will and God's ways so that, as we are open to Him, we will walk in the truth. Bible study then confirms what we are doing. If we are living opposed to what the Bible says then we are living in love of the world, not in the anointing of the Spirit.

Havning said this, for John, the **liar** is the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One of God. This was a pretty common denial considering the stigma of death on the cross. Nobody wanted to be associated with anyone who had been crucified. It's similar to following someone who was killed by lethal injection today. This is why Paul said, "*Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*" (1 Corinthians 1:22-24) The world, and those who love it, see in Jesus only foolishness at best, and something that takes us the wrong way at worst. It is only the anointing of our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit that can bring us to acknowledge the truth about Jesus and submit to it. We do follow the crucified One, and we know God accepted Him because He raised Him from the dead! This is the truth that lives in us and that guides our decisions and lives. This is why John wrote, "*No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*" (v.23)

This denial and acknowledgment goes beyond mere words. We acknowledge or deny Jesus by the lives we lead much more than by the words of our mouths. On Wednesday evening we talked about the people who come to church on Sunday, to sing the songs, put money in the offering plate, and listen to the sermon, but who are not changed by these things into the likeness of Jesus Christ. The love of the world is still in them. I referred to them as Christian Atheists (a term I have heard elsewhere). They may be in Christ, but the only real evidence of it is the hour or so they spend in a pew on Sunday morning. They spend the rest of the week living as if God doesn't exist. If you ask them if Jesus is the Christ, they would answer, "Yes." Yet they haven't allowed that truth to change them. They don't really believe it, though they may think they do.

John points out in verse 24 that the Spirit brings us deeper into the truth we learned at the beginning. What we heard is to stay in us. It doesn't get replaced. It works its way deeper and deeper into who we are. If this is what is going on in our minds and hearts, then we are in the Son and in the Father. This is not a hope, it is a promise. There is nothing uncertain about it. We may not always feel the **Spirit's** presence, but if we can look at our minds and hearts and see how He is changing us, then we have His promise that we are His. As John wrote, "*And this is what he promised us—even eternal life.*" (v.25)

Having reminded his readers, and us, that we are held in Christ by the Holy Spirit through the gospel which has been handed down from the beginning of the church, John returns to the false teachers who had gone

out from his churches. They are the ones who, through their lives and their adoption of new teachings that are against what Jesus and the apostles taught, are showing themselves to be outside of Jesus and the church. They have gone astray and they are seeking to lead the rest of the church astray as well. Eternal life is not in them and they trying to guide the church down a path that leads to death. John tells us later on, in a passage at which we will look in a few weeks, how to avoid following these false teachers and sharing their doom.

“As for you,” John wrote, *“the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.”* (v.27) We are not to go running off to new teachings and strange beliefs that claim to be true. We are to hold fast to the things we have already learned through the word of God and the Holy Spirit. We are to grow in those things and allow them to grow in us. We need to grow in the knowledge we already have and not follow those who have a counterfeit anointing. The anointing God has given us has brought us to the truth, even Jesus Christ, and we must remain in Him.