

Keep on Keeping On (part 1, audio)

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[0 : 00] Well, let's take our Bibles this morning and find our passage, 1 John chapter 2, verses 24 through 29.

! So be digressing just a little bit.! Actually continuing with something that we were looking at last week and the week before, so kind of progressively moving our way through John's thought process here as we look at his letter.

And so let me go ahead and read the passage from God's Word, starting with verse 24 of 1 John chapter 2. Therefore, let that abide in you which you have 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. And this is the promise that he has promised us, eternal life.

These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you, but the anointing which you have received from him abides in you.

[1 : 27] And you do not need that anyone teach you. But as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in him.

And now, little children, abide in him, that when he appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of him. Okay?

Again, some of this we have looked at, kind of, you know, moving from the beginning of this chapter a little further, then coming back a little and going a little further, and coming back a little and going all the way to the end.

And very important teaching in this chapter. In fact, all of John's letter is just so practical and so needed and so powerful in our lives for a number of ways, a number of reasons.

[2 : 38] But this morning I want to take this passage, actually this Sunday and the next, and speak on the subject of Christian perseverance.

Christian perseverance. Christian perseverance, something that we don't really talk about a lot, but something that's very important. Or what I want to call this morning, keep on keeping on.

You know, kind of using that little coagulism, which is really a common expression that just simply means the act of doing what you have been doing, with an encouragement to keep on doing it even more.

So keep on keeping on, or Christian perseverance. Now, to begin with, I want to remind you about John's purpose in this letter, his purpose for writing.

Whether he's writing to one particular church or a group of churches, it doesn't really matter. His purpose is very focused and very deliberate. And so let's just be reminded of his purpose here.

[3 : 43] And he actually states it a number of times throughout the letter and in different ways. But perhaps the most complete statement of his purpose is found toward the end of the letter, as we have talked about before.

But if you look there at chapter 5, verse 13 of this short little letter, here is the kind of the full, I think, full statement of his purpose. Where John says, These things I have written to you, that is, all of these things that I've written in this letter, I've written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God.

So I'm writing to you, true believers. And here is his purpose, That you may know and keep on knowing. Literally know that you know.

And keep on knowing that you have, not hope to get, but do have, eternal life. Know that you really are in the faith. So his purpose is assurance, isn't it?

And so why was the Apostle John writing with this purpose? To accomplish this purpose? Well, because, as we have seen, there were false teachers in the church.

[4 : 57] False teachers. John even calls them antichrists. They're kind of the forerunners of the antichrist who will one day come. There were false teachers, antichrists in the church, or churches.

John was writing to who were engaged in an all-out assault upon the gospel. Or we could say even more fine-tuned in this sense the basic fundamentals, the fundamental truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And this was beginning to wear down some of them, actually. It was beginning to make even some of those who were true believers, though maybe perhaps young in their faith, starting to become a little wobbly in their faith, even to the point of doubting, questioning the validity of their salvation. Now, the substance of what these antichrists, these false teachers, were teaching in the church consisted of basically two areas of theology.

In technical terms, we could call them hamartiology or the doctrine of sin. That would be one area of theology or false theology that they were teaching.

[6 : 18] The other would be, again in the technical term, Christology, or the doctrine of Christ. So the doctrine of sin, the doctrine of Christ. Those are the two major areas that these false teachers were teaching false doctrine in and leading many astray and causing many others to begin to question their own theology and their own salvation.

All right, so those two areas. And so first, these teachers were promoting a false view of sin, false understanding of sin, especially as it related to the context of the Christian life.

And what were they teaching? They were advocating an extreme kind of dichotomy between the body and the spirit. I mean an extreme dichotomy between the two. They basically promoted the idea that the spirit of a Christian was sinless, perfect, and that's all that really mattered to God.

Only the body sins. All right, so the spirit is redeemed. It's redeemed and therefore belongs to God and that's all that God cares about. And the body, on the other hand, is corrupt because all physical matter is evil and corrupt.

It belongs to this evil world. And so the body, yeah, it's just not important. This is what they were teaching. And so the spirit, since the spirit is all that really counts to God, that's all that really matters to him, what one does with his or her body does matter.

[7 : 56] Good news. Sin all you want to. That's what they were teaching. And of course we know because we've studied these passages in the first chapter, the apostle John counters with, in chapter 1, verse 8, if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

A couple of verses later, in verse 10 of chapter 1, if we say that we have not sinned, not committed any sin, and we make God a liar.

And the truth, his word is not in us. Very clear. And then there was a second area, false doctrine. These teachers were promoting a false view of Jesus Christ.

A damnable view, actually. Heretical view of the person of Christ. Christ. And some were teaching that Jesus the man was not the Son of God in human flesh.

This is what they were teaching. And, you know, and maybe perhaps some were thinking, well, you know, it's not really all that important. But it is. And so they were teaching that he only appeared to be human.

[9 : 18] He only appeared to be flesh and blood. It was a supernatural illusion. That's what some were teaching. And others, kind of moderating off of that position, some were believing and teaching that he temporarily inhabited a human body.

Just for that time, you know. That 30 some odd years. He just inhabited the body. And so later he discarded it at some point.

All right? So they did not teach a bodily resurrection. And so the body that he inhabited did die on the cross, but Christ was not there. Christ did not die on the cross.

Only that body did. And so confessing Jesus Christ as Lord only really applies to his spirit, his deity, and not to his humanity.

So Christ could not have had a body because the flesh is evil. Remember, all physical matter is evil in their view. And Christ only appeared to have a flesh and blood body.

[10 : 31] And Christ, Christ, the Son of God, did not actually die on the cross. All right? So this is what they were teaching. In the church, and the apostle John counters very strongly with, in chapter 2, verse 22, and again, we've looked at this passage, he asks, who's a liar, or says, who is a liar,

but he who denies that Jesus, that is the human Jesus of Nazareth, is the Christ.

He says he is Antichrist, the one who denies this. He's not only a liar, he is Antichrist. And a little bit later in the letter, in chapter 4, verses 2 and 3, John is going to tell us every spirit, and that's a lowercase, s, spirit, meaning every human teacher, that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.

And, by the same token, every spirit, every human teacher that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God, and this is the spirit of Antichrist.

So, very clear. He's addressing those two issues, those two false doctrines that were being taught, promoted, in the church. I like how one respected Bible teacher characterized John's letter, and it's good, I think, to think of it in these terms.

He said that John is providing his readers with a diagnostic, very important diagnostic that they can use. He said he gave this congregation a diagnostic whereby they could tell true teaching from false teaching.

[12:12] and also where they could examine their own hearts to see if they truly love God and Christ in accordance with his word. So, really, kind of a two-fold diagnostic.

And I think that is an accurate way to characterize 1 John, this two-part diagnostic. John gives them and us what we need in order to diagnose correctly those who are teaching in our churches. and also to diagnose correctly our own relationship with Christ. The truth of that. And so, that brings us to our passage for this morning.

And primarily, it pertains to the first part of John's two diagnostics. that is the one that helps us evaluate correctly those who are teachers in the church.

And really, beyond that, because we have something today that John, of course, knew nothing about, I think this would include the popular teachers and preachers who are on the radio and the TV 24-7, many of which wield a great power to shape the theology of their viewers and their listeners.

[13:35] I think they would be included here. And this really, I think, highlights the value of what John teaches us in this passage. Because, let's just think about this for a moment and be, just acknowledge the reality of this, that false teachers are often very smart people.

You know that? They're very smart people. There aren't too many false teachers who have any effect whatsoever who are just idiots or dumb.

They're very smart people. And, well-educated sometimes, not always, but certainly intelligent kind of people.

I mean, they usually are. That's usually indicative of false teachers. And also, more versed in the Scriptures, though they twist the Scriptures, they know a whole lot of Scripture.

You can quote it, even though, of course, they twist it for their purposes. But the point is that they know a whole lot more Scripture than the common people sitting in the pews.

[14:52] in churches. And I say that sadly, but it's true. And so, you know, they're adept at taking advantage of those who are ignorant in the Scriptures.

And they're able to twist certain passages in the Bible to make their false doctrine more believable and, at the very least, at least sound reasonable.

Do you recognize this about false teachers? They're very good at this. And so, many are fooled, fooled, because these false teachers seem to be so intelligent and even spiritual and logical. and what they are teaching seems to be so wise and, again, so spiritual even seems to be so scriptural.

This is the way it works. And also, false teachers, then, based upon all those things and other things, they're usually very persuasive. I mean, they have strong personalities usually.

[16:06] Very strong personalities. And they are typically very, very good and excellent communicators. You know, in the way they use words and body and they're just very, very good at communicating their false doctrine and so they're persuasive because they usually mix their lies with a certain amount of truth in order to make it reasonable, to make it believable.

And quite often they are attractive people. I don't mean just simply their physical attraction, their looks, but kind of who they are. You know, people are allured to them.

And so, you know, having said all of that and just realizing that, how are we to stay on track then? I mean, with all that being true of false teachers, how when these brilliant false teachers come on the radio and on the TV and even into our churches, how are we to stay on track and not be

sidetracked by these people?

Because they're smarter than I am. This is what we, you know, this is the challenge, this is the dilemma many of God's people face. These people are smarter than I am and they know more than I do and they are teaching about things that I don't really know a whole lot about.

And, you know, like theologies I don't understand and maybe doctrines that I've never really, really considered and are confusing to me in the first place. So how am I to stay on track with the truth?

[17:59] How am I supposed to persevere in the faith? And that's a valid question, isn't it? And it's one that John answers. I think this is his goal here, his purpose here.

And his answer is threefold. And this is what we'll see over the next couple of weeks. number one, remain in the scriptures. I mean, that sounds so simple, doesn't it?

But it's so absolutely crucial. And it is for us a foolproof diagnostic for false teaching, whether it's inside the church, a classroom, or from the pulpit.

It's a foolproof diagnostic for whether or not that teaching is true or false. It is for us to continually remain, to remain in the scriptures, the truth, the word of God.

The second one is to rely upon the spirit with a capital S, that's the Holy Spirit. And then the third one is to be rooted, always rooted, continually rooted in the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[19:08] Now we'll take the first of these this morning. And I would have you notice, and I pointed this out last week, but I want to talk a little bit more about it. The key word in this passage, the whole passage, all the way to the end of the chapter, the key word upon which actually John hangs all of his teaching, the key word is abide.

The word abide, that's the key word in this passage. It appears six times, three times in this, in one of the verses, but a total of six times.

And equally important is the small preposition that follows the word all six times. Now I want you to notice this. And it's the word in, the preposition in, abide in.

By the way, the point of this out last week, the word abide is active, that means it's a continuous, continually abide in. Now when you put these two words, these two words are combined, it means really three things.

And this is attached to my outline, not only for this Sunday, but next Sunday as well. It means to remain resolutely in one fixed position.

[20:32] Not deviate, not stray from it. To abide in, remain in, means that. It also means to rely uncompromisingly upon one supreme authority.

And it also means to be rooted permanently in one life-giving source. This is what we'll see in the next couple of weeks.

Alright, so let's look at it, how this unfolds in the passage. And so number one this morning, remain in the scriptures. Again, sounds so simple.

Remain in the scriptures, the word of God, the truth, or as John states it here in verse 24, therefore let that abide in you, or remain in you, which you have heard from the beginning.

That, the truth, the truth handed down by the apostles. Let that abide in you, remain in you, continually remain in you. I've mentioned this a number of times before and bears mentioning here, especially in this passage, but in the Greek language, word order is sometimes very deliberate, very important.

[21:57] word. And you really can't see this so much in the English. Most versions do not bring this out, but quite often, very common in the Greek to place a particular word at the beginning of the sentence in order to convey a very strong point or strong emphasis.

promises. And so this is, again, typically lost in our English, but the prime example, I think, is here right here in our passage, the New King James Version, which I read just a moment ago.

And it appears the same way in the King James Version, but the New King James Version reads this way, therefore let that abide in you, and then it goes on through the rest of the verse.

But therefore, which is the first word in the English text, is not the first word in the Greek text. The word you is.

You. And so here really would be a literal kind of word for word translation from the Greek into the English if we were to do it that way.

[23:09] It would be a little awkward. That's why translators don't do it this way. But here would be a word-for-word reading of the Greek text. You, and it's plural by the way, all of you.

You can almost see John pointing his finger. You, all of you, what you have heard from the beginning, in you let it abide.

Now do you have a sense of the emphasis here in the verse? How John is emphasizing something. You. In fact, we could paraphrase it this way. We bring in everything that John says, we can paraphrase it this way and it would be accurate.

You true believers in the church, because this is who he's writing to, you true believers in the church, you make sure, you see to it that what you heard from the beginning when you first came to believe and what they heard from the beginning was what?

The gospel handed down by the apostles. So he's saying you make sure, you see to it that what you heard from the beginning, the truth, continues to abide in you, remain in you, dwell in you.

[24 : 32] Don't stray from it. Don't move away from it. Don't forget it. Don't let something else creep in to take its place. You remain, let it remain in you.

And by the way, again, and I mentioned this last week, this is a command. Not just simply instruction, you know, it's a command.

And we know that from the form of the word abide in the Greek text. It's an imperative. This is a command. But here's what we should know about God's commands.

Two things. Obedience to God's commands stands as a proof of our relationship with God. Why do you love me if you don't obey me, Jesus said.

So, again, John's giving a diagnostic so we can examine our own hearts, in our own lives, and find out if we ought to have any kind of assurance of our salvation.

[25 : 38] And here is one of them, in the form of command. Obedience to God's command stands as a proof of salvation. But second, every command of God comes with a promise of blessing.

A promise of blessing. Both of these principles are found in this passage. Look at it. Again, the command here is essentially this. And I'm paraphrasing. I'm not reading it from the text.

Here's the basic command. See to it, you see to it, that God's revealed truth continuously abides, remains in you. See to that.

It's a command. And so, obedience to this command stands as a proof of your relationship with God. This is what he's saying. And we know that from verse 24. Look at it.

If what you heard from the beginning, continuously abides, remains in you, you also will continuously remain, abide in the Son and in the Father.

[26 : 42] So, one proves the reality of the other. And also, the opposite of this is found in the passage. Back in verse 19.

Look at it. Verse 19. This is the opposite. John says, they, that is these antichrists, went out from us. That is, they abandoned the faith.

They deserted the truth. They abandoned the truth. He says, they went out from us, but they were not of us. They were not of us. That is, they never really believed the truth.

They may have embraced some of it for a time, but they never really truly believed it, never truly received it. They never really were of the true faith. They weren't really saved.

They were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. That is, they would have let the truth abide in them, but they didn't.

[27 : 46] You see, this is the opposite of what he's saying to you, true believers, to me. See, these who departed, they did not let the truth abide in them.

The truth did not remain in them. And he finishes this up by saying, but they went out that they might be made manifest.

It might be something that is proved about them. And what is proved about them? That none of them were of us. All right, do you see?

The proof, of genuine, not the only proof, one proof, of genuine faith is that the truth continuously remains in us, in you.

So, obedience to God's command stands as a proof of salvation. But also, every command of God comes with a promise of blessing. With every command, there's a promise.

[28 : 56] Every command is a promise. All throughout the Scripture, you can even look at the Ten Commandments. Every command of God comes with a promise of blessing.

Now, certainly this promise, the ultimate of blessings, eternal life. Eternal life, verse 25, and this is the promise that he has promised us, eternal life.

Eternal life. But also, a more practical blessing. A more practical promise of a blessing. A blessing. One we need to help us to keep our sanity as we are surrounded by a world that is propagating weird and strange theologies all around us.

a blessing, a promise that will guard us from those smart, intelligent, persuasive, false teachers. a blessing that will help us distinguish truth from error. It's so simple. Do you understand what a blessing it is?

[30 : 08] That God has given us a foolproof diagnostic for truth and error and it is the Word of God. What Francis Schaeffer called true truth.

And we have it right here. And the important thing is it must remain in here. Continuously remain. See to it. This is what John is commanding us. See to it. Make sure that the truth, the truth you heard from the very beginning, the truth continuously remains in you, continuously abides in you. Focus on that. foster that. This is so important. Foster it. Feed it through the daily discipline of reading and studying and meditating upon God's Word.

And by the way, John is not telling us to learn some new truth. Isn't it amazing how we just have this very natural, very fleshly tendency to look for new truth?

[31 : 32] And it makes us vulnerable to those who are teaching it. See, this was the problem with the false teachers. They were trying to promote some new, kind of even mystical, kind of truth in the church.

Something new. Some newly discovered truth that will change one's life forever and that you will always be lacking if you don't get this truth. You know, you just got to have it.

You kind of whet your appetite. Well, this is something you absolutely have to have and you're just going to be just this much short of being the kind of Christian God wants you to be if you don't embrace this new revelation, this new truth.

And maybe it's some secret code in the Bible that has just now been discovered and unlocked for us. Or maybe it is some hidden meaning in between the lines of Scripture or in behind some special word of Scripture that has now been revealed to those who God has chosen to be the enlightened ones.

You couldn't find this for yourself, but I have found it and God has given me to you so that you can know what I know, something few people know. You know what I'm talking about?

[32 : 46] Some special thing. It's something that you cannot really know the fullness of the Christian life without it. This is what they do.

And, you know, there is, again, present, abiding in man's sinful flesh, that which craves something new, something no one else knows.

You know, some, maybe some obscure speculation or some fantastic truth claim or some mystical revelation, some exclusive revelation.

Crave that. Desire to know what only a few others know. Do you And, you know, many people will willingly discard the plain truth to embrace something that is new and mystical.

Amazing, isn't it? But John says, let the truth abide in you which you heard from the beginning. not new truth, some new revelation, but something very old.

[34 : 11] Actually, for us, even older than it was for John. 2,000 years older now. And we can hold it right here in our hands.

It's right here. You know, all of God's word, but specifically in the context of what John is teaching here, the teachings of the apostles handed down to them from the Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit as they wrote it down and given to us.

And we can have it right here. We don't have to go looking for it. Don't have to have some special pair of glasses to see it. Or some special companion book in order to interpret it.

We don't have to have some special communicator and teacher to teach us these things. We can find these things out for ourselves. We can hold it right here in our hand.

And so John says, let it continuously remain, abide in you, dwell in you. That's what he's saying.

[35 : 20] And yet, this is exactly what many professing believers today are not doing. not doing, not letting God's word abide in them.

And I say professing believers because they're probably not true believers, many of them, and just not doing this.

Case in point, Lifeway, in partnership with Ligonier Ministries, released in 2016, a survey designed to reveal the state of American theology, specifically evangelical theology.

And a very large survey, goes into a lot of different areas, but one primary part of it was designed to show the deviation from traditional Christian orthodoxy.

That is, those who identify themselves as evangelical Christians, where what they believe is beginning to deviate from biblical theology.

[36 : 38] And let me just give you kind of a sampling of it. People have the ability to turn to God on their own initiative. 82% said they believe that.

How about this one? Individuals must contribute to their own salvation. So, it's grace, but it's also works, other things.

It's God's part, your part. 74% of those who identify themselves as evangelical Christians said that was true.

I believe that. How about this one? Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God.

71%. Can you believe that? 71%. See, I believe that. The Holy Spirit is a force, not a personal being.

[37 : 56] 56%. Well over half. Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature.

54%. God accepts, I love this, God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

48%. Almost half. Not half of all those who profess to be Christians, but those who identify themselves as evangelical Christians.

God help my good deeds help to earn my place in heaven. 39%.

God will always reward faith with material blessings. 37%.

[39 : 14] 37%. And that's just a small sampling. And we wonder about the current state of the church in America, the true church.

And so here's the best diagnostic for truth and error. Remain in the scriptures. Remain in the scriptures. Not the latest novelty in theology.

But that which was handed down by the apostles, that truth we heard from the beginning. The beginning. And what are we to do with it?

Let it remain in us. Learn it more deeply. Practice it more fully.

greatest weapon we have against false doctrine. Thank you.