

Dangerous People

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[0:00] Well, last week in 1 John 2, 15-17, John told us about a dangerous love.

That's a dangerous love that we should avoid. Remember those verses said this, they said, Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it, that he who does the will of God abides forever.

In these verses, world is a reference to the spiritual system of evil that's dominated by Satan and all that offers in opposition to God, his word, and his people. John says that if we love the world, we cannot love God.

And so another way to look at the world is that world here is the morally evil system opposed to all that God is and holds dear. So in this sense, the world is the satanic system opposing Christ's kingdom on this earth.

[1:08] So in other words, we love the people of the world, but we do not love the sinful attitudes and values that they may embrace. John didn't more than just tell us what to avoid. He told us why we should avoid these things.

Look again at verse 17. It says, The world is passing away, and the lust of it, that he who does the will of God abides forever. So when compared with the life lived and the will of God, the things of this life that they have to offer are really empty imitations of God's best.

So the things of the world seem to be of great value, but they're worthless when compared to the eternal blessings that come from doing the will of God. So Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection has defeated the world that's opposed to God, and he's secured life eternal for all of those who believe.

Last week's passage was the first of two consecutive warnings from John. Tonight we go from a warning about dangerous love to a warning about dangerous people. And in 1 John 2, 18 through 27, we'll see that warning about the dangerous people.

So let's go ahead and read those verses now. 1 John 2, 18 through 27 say this, Little children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many Antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

[2:26] They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

Who is a liar, but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either. He who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

Therefore, let that abide in you which you have heard from the beginning. If what you have 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, and you do not need that anyone teach you.

[3:27] 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. We'll break tonight's passage into three sections.

Each section begins by describing a characteristic of the dangerous people. And each section ends by telling us how true believers can protect themselves from becoming victims of the dangerous people.

So in the first section of the lesson, we'll see departure versus discernment. Departure versus discernment there in your handout.

False believers eventually depart, but true believers show discernment. Listen to verses 18 and 19 for a description of the false believers.

John says again, So John begins by telling his readers that it is the last hour.

[4:45] And last hour refers to the latter times or last days. So last hour refers to the latter times or last days. And that's the time period between the first and second comings of Christ.

We should understand hour here as signifying a period of time instead of a specific duration of time. So hour signifies a period of time rather than a specific duration.

We know that God's countdown has begun, but he doesn't reckon time as we do. And any attempt to date the ending of the world or Christ's coming is doomed to failure and often brings ridicule to the proclamation of Christ.

The last hour began with the death and resurrection of Christ, and his second coming could occur at any time. The only thing we know about the last hour is that we're quite a bit closer to Christ's coming than we were when John wrote these words, but we were still in the last hour at that time too.

John says we know that it's the last hour because many Antichrist with a lowercase a have already come. And we also know that it's the last hour because the Antichrist with an uppercase A is coming.

[5:59] So Antichrist is a combination of two Greek words, anti, which means instead of or against, and Christos, which means the anointed one. I bet you're glad you came to learn that part tonight, aren't you?

I'm sure all of you knew that anyway. The many Antichrists in this letter are the false teachers. So the many Antichrists with a lowercase a are the false teachers that John opposed in this letter. And they are reminiscent of the false Christ that Jesus told the disciples about. They're forerunners of the future Antichrist with a capital A, who's also known as the beast in the book of Revelation. And of course we know that that Antichrist will exalt himself above God. As we're waiting for the any-moment return of Jesus, there will be a growing prevalence of the counterfeits.

And John's warning about a growing prevalence of counterfeit Christ echoes the message of Jesus himself. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 24, verses 4 and 5.

[7:02] Again, this is Matthew 24, 4 and 5. And Jesus answered and said to them, Take heed that no one deceives you, for many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and will deceive many.

And a few verses later, in the same chapter, Jesus said these words in Matthew 24, verses 23 through 26. Jesus said, Then if anyone says to you, Look, here is the Christ, or there, do not believe it.

For false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore, if they say to you, Look, he is in the desert, do not go out.

Or look, he is in the inner rooms, do not believe it. With the number of false teachers continuing to rise, John knew that his original readers and we ourselves would need to know how to recognize those false teachers.

And in 1 John 2, 19, John highlights one of the characteristics of the Antichrist. That characteristic is that they depart from the faith. So here's verse 19 again.

[8:09] It says, They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

This goes back to the opening verses of 1 John 2, because in the opening verses of the book, John made a distinction between we and you. We referred to the apostles, who were the eyewitnesses of Christ, and you referred to the readers.

So that same distinction is probably maintained here in verse 20. So when John says these false teachers were not of us, he means that they did not agree with the teaching of the apostles.

The Antichrist had departed from the apostolic churches, and their attitudes and actions were not of apostolic persuasion. If they had been in harmony with the apostles' teaching, they would have remained in fellowship with them.

Heresy in the Christian church, whether on the part of its saved members or unsaved people in it, always unmask a fundamental disharmony with the spirit and doctrine of the apostles.

[9:15] A man in touch with God will submit to the apostolic instruction. So look at the last phrase of verse 19, though. God works even the sins of the false teachers for the believer's benefit.

The last phrase of verse 19 says, That they might be made manifest that none of them were of us. That they might be made manifest shows divine purpose behind the departure of this group.

God uses it to show who are actually part of his teachers and who aren't. John is far from alone in saying that false teachers will be in conflict with the apostolic teaching.

Listen to what Paul said in 1 Timothy 4, 1-3. In 1 Timothy 4, 1-3, Paul wrote, Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies and hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with the heart iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from food which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

Peter and Jude also warned us that scoffers and mockers would come in the last days and that these people would also live according to their lust rather than according to the teaching of Jesus and the apostles.

[10:34] 2 Peter 3, 1-3 says this, Peter wrote, Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle, in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first, that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lust.

Jude experiences a nearly identical thought in Jude 17-19. Jude wrote, A Jew, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lust. These are sensual persons who cause divisions, not having the spirit. In this part of 1 John, and in the cross-references that we've read from Jude and Peter, we see the tie between the verses that we studied last week and the verses that we're looking at tonight.

By habitually loving worldly things, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, people may manifest that they are against Christ. So dangerous lust, then, identifies dangerous people.

Now, though, we come to the first contrast between these dangerous people and true believers. Look at 1 John 2, 20 and 21 again. Speaking to the true believers, John says this, True Christians use discernment to differentiate between true and false teachings.

[12:19] That discernment comes from two characteristics that are unique to believers. First, the Holy Spirit guards them from error. Christ, as the Holy One, imparts the Holy Spirit as their illuminating guardian from deception.

And second, the Holy Spirit guides the believer into knowing all things. True Christians have a built-in lie detector, and we persevere in the truth. Those who remain in heresy and apostasy manifest the fact that they never were genuinely born again.

In verse 20, John says that believers know all things. We know that God only knows everything, so the phrase, all things, must be limited in some way.

And in this context, all things is all the truth that the believers needed to resist the Antichrist. So in other words, they knew all that they needed to know. One of the main heresies that the first century church faced was Gnosticism, and those people claimed to have secret knowledge of the truth that led to salvation.

Here, John was opposing this by asserting that all believers knew the truth. And as an apostle, John was merely reminding them of what they already knew rather than acting as an exclusive source of the truth.

[13:38] The readers were well fortified against the Antichrist, however, because they had an anointing from the Holy One. And as a result of their anointing, the readers had adequate instruction in the truth of God.

John wrote them precisely because their apprehension of the truth was correct and because the truth should never be confused with the lie. We could, and often do, pass over the significance that believers have an anointing from the Holy One.

But we ought to spend more time meditating on that anointing. And the Greek term, *chrisma*, which is translated anointing, is related to the title Christ, which means anointed one.

And it's used in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, for the anointing of a high priest. So the anointing here depicts the impartation of the Holy Spirit to a person.

So the anointing depicts the impartation of a Holy Spirit to a person. As Christians now enjoy up by the Holy Spirit, we are joined to the anointed one and sharing his anointing.

[14 : 39] Therefore, we can know all things with respect to truth and falsehood. Because the Spirit lives within us, we know all things we need to know in order to resist the temptations of the false teachers and to live godly lives in this world.

So hear that last sentence again. Because the Spirit lives within us, we know all that we need to know in order to resist the temptations of the false teachers and to live godly lives in this world. Departure and discernment then make up the first of the three contrasting pairs in this passage of Scripture. The second pair of contrast is in verses 22 through 24. That second pair is denial versus devotion.

Once again, that's denial versus devotion. Verses 22 and 23 are where we see the denial. Denial that Jesus is the Messiah is the second characteristic of the Antichrist.

John writes, Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either.

[15 : 48] He who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. For those of us using the New King James Version, that translation misses something. The New King James starts verse 22 with, Who is a liar?

It should be translated who is the liar. Who is the liar is the correct translation there. Those of you using the English Standard version, the New American Standard or the NIV see that your translation got it correct.

At first, the difference may seem trivial, but the difference is significant. John likely is identifying specific people here. His original readers would have known then, based on what he said, who was spreading the lies.

This is the only place in all of John's writings where a liar is used with the article as a title or a designation of a known figure. So this statement is not a general condemnation of all unbelievers, but it's likely a specific rebuke of those heretics who fail to believe the truth about Jesus.

You know, it's quite possible when he said, who is the liar who said this, somebody would say, oh, that's so-and-so who says that word and so-and-so also says that.

[17 : 02] So names would immediately come to mind he was actually naming names without listing those names specifically there in the text. These false teachers have denied that Jesus is the Christ.

Possibly some, though attracted to Jesus, attempted to minimize his divinity, but it's probably more likely that the departed ones held to a view of Christ that diminished the human content of the confession of faith and denied the reality of the incarnation.

So they may have affirmed and accepted Jesus as significant and important in some manner, but their theology was inadequate in its grasp of his person and ultimately his work. For John, the height of heresy is to deny that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and Savior, and to reduce Jesus to the status of the mere man or to allow no more than a temporary indwelling of some devoted power in him is to strike at the root of Christianity.

When you think about what we face today, modern thinkers may have more refined ways of stating similar things, but they're no more immune to John's perception that they take the heart out of Christianity because in one way or another we have a lot of people today that still try to deny the fact of the incarnation.

What does John call the person who denies that Jesus is the Christ? It's one of John's favorite words who calls him a liar, and this shows the seriousness of this false view of Christ.

[18 : 31] The heretics probably never had directly denied the fatherhood of God, but by their refusal to believe that Jesus is the Christ, they've shown that they've never truly known the Father either. We know that Jesus and the Father are one, so denial or acceptance of God's revelation in the man Jesus is equivalent to a denial or acceptance of the Father.

John expands on this point in verse 23. Check out verse 23 again. It says, Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either. He who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

So the emphatic statement about how to have a relationship with the Father shows the dire consequences of believing this heresy about Christ. John begins by explaining the effects in negative terms and then he moves to the positive ones.

He prepares the way for the exhortation that is to follow. And John's claim that anyone who denies the Son does not have or possess the Father asserts unequivocally that a person who denies the Son has no parent-child relationship with God.

True believers, however, show their devotion to both the Father and the Son, and this devotion leads to eternal life. We see that in verses 24 and 25.

[19 : 49] Verses 24 and 25 say, let that abide in you which you 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. So the phrase, that which you heard from the beginning, refers to the gospel that cannot change.

So the phrase, that which you heard from the beginning, refers to the gospel that cannot change. Christian truth, then, is fixed and unalterable by allowing Scripture to impact our lives.

We abide in Christ and have fellowship with God. If John's readers would resist the lies of the Antichrist and hold on to the truth they had been taught from the beginning, they would continue abiding in fellowship with the Son and the Father.

John is so concerned with what they have heard from the beginning and that it remains in them that he repeats himself quite a bit. Repetition reinforces the urgency of the teaching.

[20 : 52] In just this verse, John uses the term what or which you heard from the beginning twice and he uses some form of the word abide three times. So the order of the Son and the Father places the emphasis on the person of Jesus Christ through whom the believer has access to the Father.

And if this good news be allowed to direct theological thought and moral practice of believers, the outcome is deep fellowship with both the Son of God and God himself. So verse 25 has a result of that fellowship with Jesus and God the Father.

That verse says, and this is the promise that he has promised us eternal life. So John reveals the content of the promise that is made available to the Christian. Of course, that's eternal life.

And this promise echoes the promises of life that Jesus makes in John's gospel. So the reference to eternal life is both that of the future promise of eternal life with the Father and the Son and the present experience of abiding in God, the Father, and in Jesus.

I put this quote in your handout as well, but listen to what John Calvin says about these verses. The sum of what is said is that we cannot live otherwise than by a nourishing to the end the seed of life sown in our hearts.

[22 : 09] John insists much on this point that not only the beginning of a blessed life is to be found in the knowledge of Christ, but also its perfection. No repetition of it can be too much since it is well known that it has ever been a cause of ruin to men that being not content with Christ, they have had a hankering to wander beyond the simple doctrine of the gospel.

Let's put the end of that last sentence in more modern English. Another way to say it is that people have always had a tendency to deviate from the simple doctrine of the gospel because they are discontented with Christ alone.

In other words, even back in his day, Calvin was lamenting that people wanted to make their salvation more difficult. Instead of relying upon repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ, they wanted to do those things plus something else.

Often, of course, that something else is works of some sort. So does Calvin's concern still ring true in our day? Think of how many people, cults, and even some Christian denominations impose other requirements for salvation upon people.

Instead, we need to get back to the simple doctrine of the gospel and be content with abiding in the Christ that's portrayed in Scripture. What we just discussed and what Calvin said back in his day is the same thing that John was telling his readers all the way back in the first century.

[23 : 33] The final characteristic of the false teachers mentioned in tonight's passage is deception. The Antichrist used deception, but true believers avoid being victims of that deception by knowing sound doctrine.

So deception versus doctrine is the third contrasting pair that we see in the text tonight. So deception versus doctrine then is the third contrast.

Look at just verse 26 by itself first. John says, These things I have written to you concerning those who tried to deceive you. The false teachers apparently sought to undermine the reader's conviction that Jesus is the Christ and that they had eternal life through him.

John's insistence that his readers genuinely know God and know his truth was part of his strategy for fortifying them against the Antichrist. Verse 27 has the contrast.

Speaking to his believing readers, John says this, But the anointing which you have received from him abides in you, 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 is taught you, you will abide in him.

[24 : 47] John remarks that he believes in his readers' continued loyalty because of the anointing you receive from him. That refers again to the Holy Spirit Christ gave them to reinforce the gospel that they first learned.

Because of this, John reasons, they need no teacher, certainly not from the false teachers who have departed from the gospel. So John exhorts believers to continue to stand strong in the faith by drawing upon the strength that is theirs through reception of the Spirit of God, which he calls the anointing.

Of course, that's first mentioned in verse 20 and then mentioned again here. The connection between the anointing the believers have received and the abiding nature of the message that we saw in verse 24 is the same message that they've heard, and that connection is brought to the forefront.

Both of these will fortify true believers in their battle against the heretics. Verse 27's phrase, you do not need that anyone teach you is one that deserves some attention.

If we just read this verse, we should have gone home after the prayer because then we wouldn't have needed to have the teaching tonight. When you look at it, though, it seems odd that John, given the instructive nature of this whole letter, would say to his readers that you do not need that anyone teach you.

[26 : 05] John's not denying the importance in the place of human teachers. The mere fact that he wrote this letter is sufficient proof of that. Yet this claim that they have no need of someone to teach them echoes the promise that Jesus made in the gospel that the Spirit would lead them into all truth.

So here are Jesus' words in John 14, 16, and 17. Jesus said, And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another helper that he may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him.

But you know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. Listen to what else Jesus said about the Holy Spirit in John 16, 13. John 16, 13 says, However, when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak, and he will tell you things to come.

The Spirit's ministry of guiding Jesus' followers into all truth is a promise that was especially directed toward the eleven disciples to whom Jesus spoke these words.

It finds particular fulfillment in the subsequent work of these disciples in personally writing or overseeing the books of the New Testament. The promise also, though, has a broader application to all believers because the Holy Spirit leads and guides all believers as well.

[27 : 32] I put this in your handout too, so here's a way to sum it up. The ministry of the Holy Spirit worked through the apostles and not the heretics to bring the message of salvation that is found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Here was the reliable truth that they were taught. Additional revelation was unnecessary. Indeed, it could be deadly. Spiritual illumination of the received traditions was the pattern that they should follow.

In addition, it's the fulfillment of the promise of the new covenant in which all the members of the community are taught by God and no one needs to be taught by his neighbor for the law of God will be written on their hearts and they will know God.

So in other words, when we get a teaching, we should listen to the Holy Spirit and see if that's consistent with what the apostles taught us and the Holy Spirit will guide us into whether that is true or not as long as we are consistently in God's word.

So in response to such deceivers, the task of genuine believers is to walk in the truth, persevere in faithfulness, and sound doctrine. So that's why you can see doctrine then is an antidote to the deception of the false teachers.

[28:46] So we can apply tonight's passage to us in at least three ways. First, we can use discernment to identify false teachers. use discernment to identify false teachers.

Secondly, we can stay devoted to the Christ revealed in Scripture. So we need to stay devoted to the Christ revealed in Scripture.

And obviously, to be devoted to the Christ revealed in Scripture, you have to know what the Scripture says about that Christ so that in itself implies that we abide in the Word.

Then finally, we should hold fast to sound doctrine. One way we can do these things then is to be like the Bereans. Test the teaching that we hear against the Scripture.

So test the teaching you hear against Scripture. Listen to Acts 17, 10 and 11. Acts 17, 10 and 11 say, Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.

[29:56] When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. They were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

So you see there what the Bereans did. They searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether what Paul and Silas taught them was true. Bereans received the word with readiness but they still verified the teaching of even Silas and Paul.

Any decent Bible teachers had welcomed and even encouraged people to test his words against Scripture. Going back to tonight's passage then, remember what John said about knowing the truth of the Gospel and letting that truth remain in us.

These again are the words of 1 John 24 and 25. Therefore, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning if what you've 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. Let the certainty of these words sink in and comfort you. He said, if what you've 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.

[31:14] Thank you.