

October 25, 2015 by Steve Brandon



You Know the Truth

1 John 2:18-23

- 1. You Know about Antichrist (verses 18).**
- 2. You Know about Apostasy (verses 19).**
- 3. You Know about Anointing (verse 20).**
- 4. You Know about Jesus (verses 21-23).**

One of the big roles that a pastor plays is that of reminding people of what they already know to be true. As I speak with people, especially those in the church, I find that I don't have to work too hard to explain to people how they have sinned. I simply need to remind them that it is indeed sin.

And I find that I often need to remind people of what God is like. He is glorious and holy and majestic. He is sovereign and in control of all things. And a big God can solve big problems.

And, as I speak with people, I find that many people know the gospel. It's simply that many don't believe it. And so, I find that I need to remind people of the gospel.

Those in the church who struggle with guilt over their sin really need to believe that Jesus died for all of their sin (1 John 1:9). They don't have to make up for it. They don't have to do anything but believe, and our sins are gone. It's such good news, it is difficult to believe it fully.

And for those outside the church, I have often found that they have heard the gospel. They have heard that Jesus died upon the cross for sins; they simply don't believe it. And I find that I need to remind them of what Jesus did, with hopes that this time, they would believe.

Furthermore, as I speak with people, it seems as if I need to remind them of the righteous path to take. It's not as if they don't know what is the righteous choice. They simply need to be reminded.

And what is true in private counseling is also true in public. For instance, take the songs we sing. We gather week in and week out to sing songs of praise to God. And most of them are songs that we know. I have told Ryan to work hard that at most we would have one new song each week. The rest are songs that we have sung before. They are songs that we know. But, as we sing, we remind ourselves of the truth that we believe.

Or take my preaching. Every week I stand up here with an old story to tell. It's the story of Jesus and his love for us. And every week, we open to a passage of Scripture and read it and think about it and I press you to believe it and apply it.

And there are some standard themes in the Bible. Some passages speak about God and his character. Some passages speak about man and his sin. Some passages speak about Jesus and what he has done for us. Some passages speak about how we are to apply these things to our lives. And the reality is that many passages speak about all of these things. And rarely does a passage of Scripture speak about something that you have never heard before. It's simply my job to remind you of what is true.

And this morning, as we come to 1 John, we will find John simply reminding his readers of what they already know to be true. If you haven't done so already, I invite you to open in your Bibles to 1 John, chapter 2. Our text this morning begins in verse 18 and will carry through until verse 23. Let me read it for you now.

1 John 2:18-23

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 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 it might become plain that they all are not of us. But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

My message this morning is entitled, "You Know the Truth." I have pulled the phraseology from verse 21, ...

1 John 2:21

I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

This is the dominating theme that ties all of these verses together. They speak of nothing new. They speak of things that John's readers had already heard and known to be true. The problem was that there were circumstances in their lives that were shaking them. People were rising up in rebellion against Jesus (verse 18). People were leaving their fellowship (verse 19). People were trying to pull them away from the faith that they had heard (verse 20, 26, 27).

But, over and over and over again, John brings them back to the things that they know to be true. And John was reminding them that all was well. Nothing had changed. God was still on the throne. And all that he had taught them was true. Don't let these people who come along shake you from your foundation. Because, "You Know the Truth."

And maybe you are here this morning and there are some difficult things in your life that are pulling you away from your foundation of everything that you know to be true about Jesus. Maybe some people have come along to persuade you out of the way. Maybe you have read something recently that is a bit disturbing to you. Maybe you are facing some trials in your home or at work, which are rocking your world. Maybe the political environment is shaking you. Maybe it's the moral decay in our country -- Homosexuality, Marijuana, Pornography. Maybe you are simply growing dull in your faith, doubting whether it's worth it all.

If any of these things are true of you this morning, then this text is for you. As we go back to some of the basic realities of the Christian faith. Despite what is going on around us. The reality is this: none of it should surprise us. Because, we know the truth. Let's begin with my first point.

1. You Know about Antichrist (verses 18).

Look at verse 18, ...

1 John 2:18

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.

With these words we delve into the mysteries of the end times, with words like "last hour" and "antichrist." When will this be? How long until the end? Who is the antichrist? What will he be like? What will he do?

These are all difficult questions. But, whatever are the answers to these mysteries, those in John's day knew full well what was taking place. Look again at verse 18, "as you have heard." In other words, they knew the truth. They knew what was going on.

Apparently, John's readers had been told that antichrist was coming. And they had seen that there were "many antichrists" on the scene already. In fact, the presence of these "antichrists" signaled the last hour. "... Therefore we know that it is the last hour, " John writes (1 John 2:18).

And I'm sure that this was shaking some people up. But, John was giving them reassurance that nothing was out of control. Indeed, this is what will happen in the end. Many will set themselves against Jesus. That's what "antichrist" means. It means, "anti-christ" or "against Christ," if you will.

You can see that definition come in verse 22, ...

1 John 2:22

Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.

The antichrist is the one denying the Father and the Son. And in this way, the antichrist is "against Christ." And there were many in John's day who were "against Christ." And they were seeking to deceive the believers. Look down at verse 26, ...

1 John 2:26

I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.

Look over at the beginning of chapter 4.

1 John 4:1-3

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

Look over at 2 John and verse 7

2 John 7

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.

John's readers were very familiar with the "antichrist."

The topic of the antichrist has been taken up by many since John's day. There seems to be this incessant desire to identify who exactly this is. In the days of the early church, it was the Roman emperor, who set himself against the Christian church and demanded that people bow instead to himself. People like Nero or Diocletian.

In the days of the Reformation, the one most identified with being antichrist was the pope. The one who stands in the place of Christ as Christ's vicar on the earth. People like Pope Leo or Pope Gregory.

In our days, any rising world ruler often gets the title of being the antichrist. People like Adolf Hitler or Michael Gorbachev or even Ronald Reagan.

People are always trying to identify this single individual who seeks to unify the world under his power and thus, sets himself most strongly against Christ and his ways. And yet, what is often missed is that antichrist isn't so much a single man, as it is anyone who sets himself against Jesus. In fact, did you know that the word, "antichrist" appears only four times in all of the Bible. And I have read them all for you this morning. 1 John 2:18 and 22. 1 John 4:3 and 2 John 7. That's it.

And if anything we see here from John's writings is that there isn't one single antichrist. There are many antichrists! Verse 22 describes this as well as any, ...

1 John 2:22

Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.

The antichrist is whomever denies that Jesus is the Christ. You know many people who deny that Jesus is the Christ. You know many antichrists. In fact, in some measure, any non-Christian is antichrist. Because every non-Christian denies that Jesus is the Christ.

In fact, believing that Jesus is the Christ is the sign of being born again.

1 John 5:1

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.

And everyone who denies that fact has set himself against Christ. And thus, is antichrist. And the spirit of the antichrist was in the world during the days of John (4:3). And the spirit of the antichrist has been in the world ever since.

Now, that's not to say that there won't be a single world ruler that will rise up in the final days to draw people away from Jesus and to himself. You read Revelation and there is a focus upon a single man. I simply point this out, that he is never called, "Antichrist." That word is borrowed from John's epistles to apply to the world ruler in those days.

And the danger in mis-using this word is that there is hardly anything that will fuel more speculation and worry and fear than identifying a single, present figure as "The Antichrist." This truly is so contrary to the heart behind everything that John has written about the antichrist.

John is seeking to stabilize his readers. As they see so much happening around them when is decidedly "against Christ," he says, You Know about Antichrist (verses 18). You don't need to be alarmed. This hasn't caught us by surprise. It is what you ought to expect. It's simply a sign of the end, which John identifies as "the last hour" (verse 18).

John had just said (in verse 17) that "the world is passing away along with its desires." And now, John brings out the fact that this will be soon. He says that "it is the last hour" (verse 18a). And this is only confirmed by the fact that many antichrists that have come on the scene (verse 18b).

And surprisingly, this term the "last hour," is used only once in the Bible, right here in verse 18. In John's gospel, we often hear Jesus speaking of "his hour," denoting the time when his life would come to a climax on the cross. [1](#) And certainly, this reference to the "last hour" has reference to the time when the history of the world comes to a climax, when Jesus returns at sets all things right. The "last hour" is certainly parallel to other words denoting the final days.

Paul spoke about the "last days" in the beginning of 2 Timothy, chapter 3.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

In other words, as the world nears its close, people will become worse and worse. But, such is not the case for the child of God. We are to avoid such people. Peter spoke in much the same way.

2 Peter 3:3

[know] this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

Now, the problem for us (that wasn't a problem in John's day), is how the "last days" could last 2,000 years. Why the Lord has delayed so long in returning, I don't know. From God's standpoint, it hasn't been so long.

2 Peter 3:8

With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The delay is only that he might give time for repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

And God has given 2,000 years of opportunity for repentance. And we ought to live today like it is the last hour. Indeed, Jesus is coming. And we ought to have the heart of John, as he writes at the end of Revelation. Revelation 22:20 says, "He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." Do you long for his coming? Are you ready for his coming?

So, when you see the spirit of the antichrist, don't worry. Don't fret. Don't fear. But, walk in the way of righteousness. You know about Antichrist (verses 18). Secondly, ...

2. You Know about Apostasy (verses 19).

We read about apostasy in verse 19.

1 John 2:19

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 it might become plain that they all are not of us.

John surely wrote this because his readers experienced what we all have experienced. We all have experienced those who used to be in fellowship with us, worshiping the Lord each Sunday, engaged in Bible study with us during the week, seeking a God-centered home. And yet, they have left us.

And I'm not talking about leaving our church for another church. That's painful and difficult in its own right, that there is something in us that is not helping them walk with Christ so much that they seek out another fellowship. I'm not talking about that.

I'm talking about not gathering with any group of believers. I'm talking about leaving the faith. I'm talking about apostasy. Faces and names come to my mind. Perhaps for you as well, faces and names come to mind. You used to have sweet fellowship with them. And now, they are far from God.

And John tells us how to think about such individuals. He says, "They were not of us." Oh, it may have looked like they were one of us. But, they really were not one of us. In some regard, they were like spies. Not in the sense that they had some covert ideas in mind. But, in the sense that they dwelt among us completely unsuspecting. Never would we have imagined these people to be false.

I simply say this: never be surprised at how well people can pretend. Never be surprised at how well people can pretend to love Christ.

The Christian life is fairly easy to imitate. It simply requires a bit of diligence to come to church once a week. It simply requires an hour or two. It simply requires a bit of sanctified conversation. But, that's it. And many can play this game. And the bigger the church, the easier to play the game.

And some can play the game even at a small church where everyone knows each other. They can come to church several times each week. They can be involved in the church. They can serve the people of the church. They can pray in public. They can even preach.

Think about Judas. He was with the other 11 disciples from the beginning, and none of them suspected that Judas would betray Jesus. He helped shepherd the crowds and distribute the bread to feed the 5,000, and none of the disciples knew that he didn't believe. He kept the money bag, and none of the disciples suspected that he was pilfering from it. Even when Judas went out to betray Jesus, none of them suspected what he was doing. But, Jesus knew. He knew from the beginning that Judas would betray him.

At one point, Jesus was talking with many of his disciples, saying, "There are some of you who do not believe" (John 6:64). And John adds parenthetically, "(For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him)" (John 6:64).

Yes, they were among the disciples. Yes, they looked on the outside like disciples. But, they were not genuine. Judas played the game pretty well. And for many in the church, it's all a game. It is all a show. And at some point, they leave the church. And they leave the faith. And John says "they left because they were not of us."

In fact, their departure was actually a sign that they were not of us. Because, John says, if they had been one of us, they would have continued with us. Because, this is the reality of a genuine believer in Christ. He will remain faithful until the end. This is the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.

Certainly, we believe that once you are saved, you are always saved. Jesus spoke of being "born again." Paul spoke of "regeneration" (Titus 3:5) and becoming a "new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17) when you believe in Christ. And nowhere does the Bible speak of being "unborn" or being "unregenerated." It doesn't speak this way, because it doesn't take place.

Now, to be sure, people depart from the faith. We call this apostasy. But, verse 19 tells us that their departure is simply a sign that they were never genuine in the first place. Look again at verse 19, ...

1 John 2:19

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 it might become plain that they all are not of us.

Remember again that 1 John was written to give identifying signs of genuine belief, so that assurance of eternal life may result.

1 John 5:13

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

And here in verse 19, we have the obedience test. When you endure and remain true, especially in light of the many deceivers and antichrists who are trying to deceive you, you may have assurance that you are indeed in the faith. Because, it is the genuine who will endure until the end.

When Jesus spoke of the end, he spoke of terrible things. He said that persecution would come (Matthew 24:9). He said that "many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another" (Matthew 24:10). He said that "Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray" (Matthew 24:11). He said that "the love of many will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12). But, then he said, "The one who endures to the end will be saved," (Matthew 24:13).

Because, it is the one who endures to the end who is the true believer. And the fact that you have continued in the face of the antichrists and in the face of the deceivers should be a comfort to you. You should be assured that you have eternal life.

Now, that's not to say that we let our guard down. Instead, you show diligence. In 2 John, he says, ...

2 John 7-9

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.

Apostasy is a sign of unbelief, which should come as an assurance to those who are in the fold. And, as John says, "You know the truth." You Know about Apostasy (verses 19).

Let's move on to my third point. You Know about Antichrist (verses 18). You Know about Apostasy (verses 19). Thirdly, ...

3. You Know about Anointing (verse 20).

1 John 2:20

But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.

These words probably bring John's readers back to think upon what's been happening in their congregation. Deceivers have come (verse 26; 2 John 7). False prophets have arisen (1 John 4:1). And they are trying to lead the believers astray into their own ideas.

Now, some have gone away (i.e. verse 19). But, John is writing to those who have stayed. And he is giving assurance to them that they don't have to follow in their ways. They don't have to be deceived by what they are saying.

Because, they have an anointing by the Holy One and they all have knowledge. And, they all have knowledge enough to know what is true and what is false. And they don't have to follow in the false ways.

Now, today, when this word, "anointing" is used, it is often used of the charismatic teacher. The one who seems to have a special connection with God. The one who constantly gets "a word from the Lord." And often, this word is used to trump the Bible. People will look to what the leader has to say more than they look to what God has said. Furthermore, when the "anointed one" says something, it must be true, because, after all, he is "the anointed one," regardless of what the Bible says.

And, there are times when "the anointing" is used to exert power. When the leader wants his way, he simply pulls the "anointed" card and gets a "word from the Lord," which only verifies his position. And no one can question him. Especially because the words of the Old

Testament are brought to the forefront, "Touch not the Lord's anointed" (1 Chronicles 16:22; Psalm 105:15), as if to say that the leaders of the church cannot be questioned!

And when it comes to people's lives, "the anointed one," can have a tremendous grip upon people, demanding that they do his bidding, because he is the Lord's anointed. And I would not doubt at all that similar arguments were being made by the deceivers and false prophets of John's day. "God told me <thus and such>, you must follow me, because I have been anointed by the Lord."

And isn't it curious that when John speaks of being "anointed," he says that the anointing is for everyone, not only for the leaders. He says, ...

1 John 2:20
But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.

See, this anointing that John is talking about isn't merely for the select few. It is the reality for all who believe. We all have this anointing.

Now, it is difficult to know exactly what this refers to. It may refer to the Holy Spirit, himself, who comes into the life of believers. It may refer to the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It may refer to the word of God that dwells in us. It may refer to the renewed mind that comes with regeneration. But, whatever it means, it's application is clear. We don't have to follow the whim of false teachers or antichrists who claim a superior knowledge. Because we all have knowledge!

Look at how extensive this knowledge is (in verses 26 and 27).

1 John 2:26-7
I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.

"His anointing teaches you about everything." That's a pretty exhaustive statement. But, it's true. God guides each of us into the truth. And we don't have to follow after ever teaching. We can follow the teaching of the Lord.

And the question that comes into my mind is this: "What use is there for pastors and teachers in the church?" I mean, you can take this to an extreme and do away with pastors in the church.

Now, obviously, that's not right, for God has given pastors and teachers to the church (Ephesians 4:11). He gave them to shepherd and teach the church. They aren't useless. But, verse 20 guides their usefulness. And verse 20 gives comfort to those who teach.

A pastor's usefulness comes when his message is God's message. And you know, church family, how hard I work to see that this is the case. I come here week after week after week, searching for the original meaning of the text. "What did John mean when he wrote?" "How did his original hearers understand it?" And then, I take that interpretation and seek to apply it appropriately to our lives. And you can go home, like the noble Bereans, and see if what I am saying is true.

There's a reason why our small groups are looking at the text that will be preached. First of all, it gives you some confidence that you can rightly interpret the Bible for yourself. Second, it provides accountability for me (or whoever else is preaching), that we preach what you can see for yourself in God's Word.

Oh, there might be a depth that you hadn't seen before. And there might be some new insights for you. At least I hope there are.

But, fundamentally, what you see in your small groups should be what I preach on Sunday morning. And what I call you to as a pastor is nothing other than what God has called you to be and to do as His people. And such exhortations will ring in your heart, because ...

1 John 2:20
But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.

Or, as I have said it, "You know the truth." Which is exactly what verse 21 is saying, ...

1 John 2:21
I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

In many ways, "I [preach] to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth."

Finally, let's just end quickly.

4. You Know about Jesus (verses 21-23).

1 John 2:21-23
I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one

who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

This is the truth: Jesus is the Christ. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is the one who has come to save us from our sins.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 25, 2015 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] John 2:4; 4:21; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23