



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 John 2:18-27

"Antichrists"

1 John 2

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our text this morning is 1 John chapter 2. We're going to look at verses 18-27.

"Children, it is the last hour; as just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. As for you, 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.

"This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.

"These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, just as it has taught you, you abide in Him."

May the Lord bless this reading of His word and bless our time in it together. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, what a blessing it is to be here with the saints. And we do pray this is a healthy assembly, a healthy church, and we do know that the way to be healthy is through Your word and through the study of it and the proper exposition of it, and we pray for that this morning, that it would be expounded well. But not only that, that we would receive it. And we know we receive it by Your grace. You open our hearts to do that, just as You opened Lydia's heart in Philippi two millennia ago. You've been opening hearts ever since to receive the gospel and then to receive the ministry of the word.

Paul prayed that the Ephesians, who were believers, would have their eyes enlightened, and we need that too. We need to have clarity of understanding of Your word. And so Lord, I look to You to bless us in that way. We all do. We pray, Lord, that You would open our hearts to receive Your truth, You would guide us in our thinking, You would give us an understanding of this text, of the urgency of the situation which we live, and the importance of living according to Your word, as John said, letting it abide within us, letting it control our lives and direct us and sanctify us and change us and make us increasingly like Your Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

Give us a desire for good doctrine, true doctrine, Your word, and having it abide within our hearts, that we might know truth from error and we might live correctly.

Bless us in our lives. Bless us in the material things of life. Provide for us. We look at our prayer requests lists and, as **Ken** reminded us, a vital church is a praying church, and we need to be praying for one another and praying for those who have special needs. We all have needs. We all have special needs. Some are more apparent than others at certain times in our lives. Some are without work. We pray for them, that You would open doors of opportunity. Some have health problem; encourage them, strengthen them, help them to rest in Your promises. Some are facing very critical times in their life and I

pray that You would strengthen their faith and prepare them for whatever You have for them, because whatever it is, in Your will it's good. And someday we'll learn why these things happen and why our lives took the turns that they did. You know. You're in control and we can rest in that. And we give you praise and thanks for that.

Lord, bless our nation. Give our leaders wisdom at every level. And bless this land with an interest in the things of God. Bring about revival. If that happens, it will happen through Your people, as we witness for Christ and we speak of the gospel and we live it. So, Lord, use us in that. Bless us to that end.

And to that end, bless our time together, that we built up in the faith. And prepare our hearts for a time of study and worship. We pray these things in Christ name. Amen.

[Message] In the winter of 1776, three days before the battle of Trenton, a pamphlet by Thomas Paine was read to the continental army. It began with the well-known line, "These are the times that try men's souls." Thomas Paine had a gift for turns of phrases. He goes on to warn of the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot, who shrank from service, but he praises the person who stands by it. The title of the pamphlet is "The American Crisis." It was written at a time of real crisis, when the Americans faced the Red Coats.

John wrote of a time like that. We could even call his text "The Christian Crisis." The church was facing a far greater danger and a more menacing enemy, the antichrists. They are the human face of those spiritual forces already identified as the world, the flesh, and the devil. They are Satan's warriors and ministers, as active today as they were in the days of the apostles.

So how do we deal with that? That's what John now tells us. He wrote this letter to give confidence in the conflict and reminds us of the weapons of war. The confidence that he was giving to the church to whom he had written is, "You are genuine. You are the believers. So don't be confused. Be encouraged and be engaged. The weapons

that you have at your disposal are more than sufficient. They are the word of God and the Spirit of God."

Now John does this in three parts. We could outline the passage simply as the first. He identifies the enemy in verses 18-21. Then secondly, he states the error, the false teaching of the enemy, in verses 22 and 23. And then thirdly, he explains the means or the weapons of our defense in this spiritual battle.

And he's already given the encouragement that our adversary is already defeated. The world, he said, all that is hostile to God, all that's hostile to Christ and His people, is passing away. Still, the fact that it is passing away doesn't mean that it isn't here now and a real enemy. It is and we need to be alert to that.

And John sounds an alarm in verse 18. He does so with real concern and genuine affection. He calls them children. That's his favorite description of those believers to whom he's writing: My children, my little children. Then his tone turns almost apocalyptic. He tells them it is the last hour. An antichrist is coming. Now that is both disturbing and puzzling. Antichrist is coming and the time is short. We are living in the last hour.

And our thoughts naturally turn to a passage like Revelation 13 and the lurid images that John gives in his vision of the seven-headed beast, with horns coming out of the sea. Now, that's a prophecy. It's a prophecy of the coming of the antichrist. Was John saying that that was about to happen? Because if he was, it didn't happen, not in the last decade of the first century. And as you might expect, critics think John was mistaken.

He wasn't mistaken. John uses the word "hour" in different ways. He uses it as we normally use the word "hour," as an increment of time, of 60 minutes. He uses it that way. But he uses it of an undetermined period and of a unique period of time. That's how he uses it here, something like the last days. But probably more like the final phase of the last days.

F.F. Bruce wrote the last decade of the first century was five minutes to midnight on the clock of destiny. So what does that mean for us in the first part of the 21st century? Bruce explains that while history and prophesy ran in a straight line to the Lord's first coming, now history's course is altered. It has run right up to the very brink of the end and is always near it. Think of it as a road running right toward a great gulf or chasm, and just as it comes to the precipice, it takes a sharp right and begins to run along the edge of that canyon or precipice, and could turn into it at any moment. That's the age in which we live. "In the Christian era," Bruce says, "It's always five minutes to midnight. He operating system always right at the door. We are always at the edge of the final consummation." In other words, since the first century, the stage has been set for the end of days – for the rapture, the coming of the antichrist, the great tribulation, and the second coming.

John didn't know when it would happen. No man does. But things were such in his day that it could have occurred. They are the same in our day. The stage is set. We are on the edge. What alerted John to the crisis and the real possibility of the coming of antichrist was the fact that there were forerunners of the antichrist already in the world. That's what he says.

"Antichrist is coming. Even now many antichrists have already appeared. From this we know that it is the last hour." Now that's the enemy that he identifies as the problem that these Christians were facing. This is who they were contending with – antichrist. Now, again, when we think of antichrist, we think of the beast, a repulsive figure, a terrifying persecutor of the saints, a monster. And he will be that. But he won't appear repulsive to the world. He'll be an eloquent, charismatic person.

Revelation 13:3 says, "The whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast." Well, God sees him as a beast. That's what he is from God's perspective. But the world sees him quite differently.

He is a savior, and that tells us a lot about the antichrist in John's day and in our day.

They're charismatic. They can be – can be charming, attractive, appealing figures who speak very well. But it is their speaking that is deadly. It is their teaching that is deadly, and John explains their teaching, their heresy, in verses 22 and 23. And when we look at that, we see that they deny Christ. They reject the gospel, and they do so in a convincing way.

And in doing that, they demonstrate that they don't know God. They demonstrate that they are not his children. They are not saved. they deny the way of salvation. Now that's what he's going to say. But here, in verse 18, John is still identifying the enemy. He describes them as antichrists, as people who are against Christ. That's the meaning of this Greek word, this preposition "anti." We have it in our vocabulary – anti. Anti this – we're against something.

And so it has that essential meaning that they are against Christ, but there's also another subtle meaning, or a variation of that, I should say, with the meaning "instead of," or "in place of." So it also has the sense of substitution or being a substitute. In this case it would be a false Christ, one who appears to be a Christ, but is false – or more to this context, a false prophet, a counterfeit prophet who appears to be genuine – comes on the scene as genuine, doesn't attack the person of Christ, claims to be teaching about Christ and supporting Christ. And doing so, probably in a positive, winsome way. But all of it is actually denying Him and opposing Him. Both of these I think are to be understood in John's meaning.

They posed as genuine men of God. They claim to walk in the light. They claim to have the truth, to really know God, to really represent Christ. But John writes in verse 18, "They went out from us, but were not really of us." In fact, that's the reason they left us, he's saying, because they were not genuinely of us.

That doesn't mean, of course, that when people leave a church or if they leave this congregation to go to another church that they're

antichrists. These people left because they followed a different gospel. But that tells us a lot about the visible church, that at any given time a church either has or may have a mix of false brethren and genuine brethren. And we can't always tell which are the true and which are the false. That's the parable of the tares and wheat that our Lord told in Matthew 13. An enemy came one night and he so tares in a farmer's field. The servants wanted to pull up all the tares when they saw them grow, but the farmer said no, because in pulling up the tares they might also with them pull up wheat. And so what they were to do was just wait and let the field grow, and then later at the harvest, the reapers will come. They'll gather up all of it together and then they will separate them out and they'll burn the tares. So it looks to the future, it looks to the final judgment when God will sort it all out.

But this indicates something about the nature of a church, of a professing church. Some of them are not genuine. There are tares in the midst of an assembly, of a Bible-believing, Bible-teaching, preaching assembly. There are tares in the midst of it and they're not apparent. It's not clear who they are.

And also I think it says something about genuine believers, that some of them are not all that different at times from unbelievers. They're immature, they're rebellious. Paul called the Corinthians carnal, meaning they were fleshly, they were immature, in 1 Corinthians 3:3.

Ultimately we don't know the hearts of people. It's not given to us to know that and to determine that. The Lord knows. The Lord is the one who determines these things. What we are to do and what we can do and what is our responsibility to do is give correction where it is needed, give encouragement where it's needed. Always give sound teaching, right doctrine, and that in itself often separates the false from the true. It did in the Lord's ministry. You remember in John chapter 6, He has this multitude following Him. He's fed this multitude miraculously, the 5,000-plus, probably 15,000, 20,000 people in all. He fed this multitude. Well, they wanted more of that

bread. They wanted to be fed again, and so they followed Him and they showed a deep interest in Him until He began teaching the next day, and then they listened to the things that He taught. And it was offensive to them and so they left.

Well, that happened in the church that John wrote this letter to. A group of people followed a teacher, or they followed a group of teacher, out from the midst of this church, where there truth was being taught, to form another group, a culture that was based on false doctrine. The separation was tragic in one sense – tragic for those who left, but it was also good, because it purified the church. "They went out from us, but were not really of us." It's not healthy to have those among us who were not really of us. It's not healthy to have tears among the wheat. God has His way of separating the wheat and the chaff, the wheat and the tears. And oftentimes it is through the teaching of the word of God.

These individuals went out because they were not really of them. They failed to persevere in the faith. They stopped believing the gospel that they had professed to believe in, demonstrating that they were never really believing in it to begin with. They were never genuine people of saving faith. They were never really of them. That's what John says. They never truly believed the gospel.

Now, the perseverance of the saints is one of the most encouraging doctrines in the Bible when rightly understood. But it is not designed to lull the indifferent into a sense of false security. We don't produce perseverance. It's not the result of our resolve and energy. It produces resolve and energy in us, but it's not the result of our own will and our own willpower. Perseverance is what God does in us, what He does through us. That's what Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6, that "He who began a good work in you is the one who will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus," not we ourselves.

So really, maybe a better name for the perseverance of the saints is the preservation of the saints, or the perseverance of God with the saints, because He keeps us and keeps us in His family and keeps us in

that life, that eternal life that He has given to us. It's His work from beginning to end. But the maintenance of the good work in the believer, the concern that the believer has, his or her faithfulness is the evidence. It's not the cause. It's the evidence that God has begun that good work.

Those who left the true fellowship, those who went out from them proved that that work had never begun in them. They left the light just as Judas did. He professed faith and he had demonstrated it, seemed to be genuine for some three years as he walked with the Lord during His ministry. Did things that the others did, preached, served, ministered. In fact, they trusted him. They gave him the purse. He was the treasurer. They thought highly of him.

But then John tells us in John 13:30 that he went out from them. That's the same word in John 13 that John uses here. He writes that he went out, you'll remember, from the upper room, and it was night, which is John's way of saying he went out into spiritual night, into his spiritual element, his spiritual world. He went back into the darkness. Why? Because he couldn't stand the light in that upper room. He departed from Christ because he never was of Christ. In fact, Jesus made that clear.

In John 6, after all the crowds had left and there were just the 12 there, He said, "Are you not going to leave also?" And Peter says, "Where are we going to go? You're the one that has words of eternal life." And the Lord said, pointed out that, "One of you is the devil." He didn't say who it was, but it became evident that night when Judas left. When he went out, he showed who he really was.

Well, that's what has happened in this church to whom John is writing this letter. Now we don't doubt that he thought of Judas and his departure that night into the darkness. Well, what do we do in such a situation? What do we do to deal with such a situation, such individuals? Well, we do what every church is to do, what the apostles did, what Paul himself did when he was Ephesus, what he told the Ephesian elders, or reminded them of what he had done when he met

them at Miletus, recorded in Acts chapter 20. He preached the whole counsel of God. When he was there, that's what he did. He preached the word. That's what he tells Timothy to do in his last letter to him. Preach the word. Teach the whole counsel of God. Teach it clearly, teach it pleasantly. But teach it. And if it offends, if predestination offends people, as it did those in John chapter 6, if humility and sacrifice and service and atonement offends as it did Judas in that upper room and they depart the way he did and the others did from the Lord, then okay.

Now, I don't say that flippantly. I say that just fine, but we leave all of that to the Lord. That is not something we can control, nor should we try to do that. It's His church. He builds His church. It's not ours. It's not our ability and our responsibility to build it. We can only do what He would have us to do. He's the one who builds it. He's the one who purifies it, and He does that with the truth. And those who are not His sheep, who are not able to hear because they don't have the ears to hear, will not hear it. In fact, the truth grates on their soul and so they leave.

What we must do is be faithful to our responsibilities and teach the truth. That's what the church is about. It's about a lot of things. It's about fellowship with one another. It's about worship and singing hymns that honor the Lord and encourage us. But it's about the word of God essentially, because Paul defines the church in 1 Timothy 3:15 as "the pillar and support of the truth." So we preach it. We teach it.

And that happened in the church John was writing to, the church from which these antichrists lived. They preached the truth, and John recognizes that in verses 20 and 21, and he tells him so. He tells me they're faithful to the word. They knew the truth.

"I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth." Now, we've talked about the three tests of life around which John structures this epistle, those which are the evidences of genuine birth, genuine new birth, genuine spiritual life. And this is the third test of life, the

third proof that showed that these people were genuine, that they were wheat and not tares. They knew the truth. They believed it and they defended it. In fact, you'll remember earlier, like the previous passage, where John speaks of the young men, talks about the children, the fathers, the young men, and repeats that the young men had overcome the evil one, had overcome these false teachers. They'd understood the truth. They prevailed. They believed it and they defended it. And that's one of the tests that John uses to demonstrate that they are genuine believers and they should rest in that and be encouraged by that.

In fact, all three of these tests were true of them. They obeyed God's commands, not perfectly of course, but that's the trend of their life. They certainly show an interest in and an effort at obeying God's commands. They loved the brethren and they knew the truth. They believed it.

And all of that is the fruit of grace, and it was the fruit of their lives. It was demonstrated in their lives. So again, John was encouraging this congregation by reminding them that they believed. They knew the truth; they believed it. They understood the truth. They defended it. They were right. They were genuine.

That's the purpose of this letter. It's to encourage the discouraged. What John was not doing was he was not testing these people to determine whether or not they were saved. He believed they were saved. He was confident in it. He didn't have doubts about them. He was convinced they were saved, they were genuine children of God. Some of them were evidently worried about that, worried about their salvation. These false teachers, these antichrists, had shaken their faith and robbed them of assurance. And so John was writing this letter to restore their assurance and their confidence in order that they would grow in the faith.

Now one of the ways that we do that is by reminding a person of the gospel. I've said this before, as we'd been going through 1 John, that this is not an uncommon problem, certainly not with young

believers. But at times even older believers come to this point where they question their salvation. They wonder, "Am I really a child of God?" Well, God has given us a book that helps us understand that and it lays down principles that guide us in understanding that to restore to us the assurance of our salvation. And one of those tests is the gospel. Do you believe it? Do you understand it? Is that what you're trusting in?

So when we deal with this, we remind people of that. We remind them of the gospel, of what he or she believed in the beginning, and reinforcing that by asking them if that's what they understand and they still believe. They believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, who became a man and died in the place of sinners. That's what you believed when you first came into the faith. Do you understand that? Yes. You still believe in that? Yes, believe that.

Well, that's what a believer does. That's what a Christian does. That's what child of God does. We can take them to a text like John 3:16, which demonstrates that very clearly that salvation is through faith and faith alone. It's by the grace of the cross alone.

Believers in Jesus Christ are saved. It's those who do not believe the gospel who are not saved. And that's the error of the antichrists. That's what John says in the next portion of verses 22 and 23, where he exposes their heresy. "Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son."

Now that's apostasy. Sometimes wonder what is apostasy? How do we define apostasy? Apostasy is not falling into sin. It's not becoming cold in one's spiritual life. That's wrong, of course. That is sin and we need to be diligent about that. We need to be diligent about dealing with sin in our life. We need to confess it daily. John has instructed us to do that.

But apostasy is something different from falling into sin, even grievous sin. Apostasy is turning from the truth. It's turning away from the gospel. It's denying Christ. A person can be quite moral and

upstanding, brilliant, all good things, and do that. Now, these antichrists, as John is now describing them, had moral issues as well, and a lack of love. But essentially they're defined as apostate, because they denied Christ. They turned away from the truth. They were once in the congregation, professing faith, professing to be genuine believers, and then they left. And this is the reason they left, because they denied that Jesus is the Christ, didn't believe that.

In verse 22, John says they denied the Son. John says such a person who denies the Son also denies the Father. You can't deny the Son without denying the Father. The only way to come to the Father is through the Son. So to deny the Son is to deny the Father.

Now how they did that is of some question that commentators deal with, and we have looked at it and considered it ourselves as we've been studying this epistle. It may be that they had a doctrine that separated the human Jesus from the divine Christ. Or they separated Jesus from the Father; Jesus was just a man. He had not special connection to Him. He's not the Son of God; He's just a man.

But it may be that it was a little more complicated than that and that they believed that Jesus and Christ were two separate persons. That was the heresy of Cerinthus, who was a popular teacher, heretic at this time in Ephesus. And his teaching was popular throughout Asia Minor. He drove a wedge between Christ and Jesus. He taught that the divine Christ temporarily possessed the human Jesus, that when Jesus was being baptized by John in the Jordan the Christ came upon Him in the form of a dove and was in Him throughout His ministry. But then when He went to the cross, and just before He died, He departed from Him.

And so that may be what is referred to here. That may be the heresy. He may be the principle person that John is writing against. There's some evidence for that. There's an old story traced to Polycarp, who was a disciple of the apostle John that when the apostle was in Ephesus he went to the bath house. And as he entered the bath house, there was Cerinthus and so John ran out, shouting, "Let us flee,

lest even the bath house fall down because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within."

Well, that gives some support to Cerinthus being the character here that is the one stirring up these problems. So perhaps it was. He may be the historical individual behind the problems of this book. He was certainly and antichrist. But there were others. Could have been someone else. There have been many such antichrists down through history that fit such a spiritual profile – Arius, Pelagius, even, sorry to say, some of our own patriots, like Thomas Paine, who was a deist and, in fact, an implacable foe of the gospel and Christianity. He denied the deity of Christ.

That is common today as well and would include anyone from some New Age culture leader to a liberal preacher in a mainline denomination. Anyone who denies that Jesus is Christ, anyone who denies that He is the eternal Son of God. John doesn't spare such people. John doesn't mince his words. He says, "This is the antichrist." Paul's equally severe. In 1 Timothy 4:1, he writes, "Deceitful of deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons."

Well, there's nothing more deceitful and demonic than denying Christ and the gospel. Now, it may not seem satanic when one hears it. We think satanic is something bizarre, mysterious, and frightful. And I suppose it really is, but it doesn't appear that way, not usually. And usually these people won't appear to be satanic. But their method is certainly the method that he used. And what kind of method does he use? Well, he doesn't use the obvious. He uses the subtle. He's very deceptive. He draws people in unsuspectingly, doesn't use the ugly and the fiendish, as much the attractive and the dignified, the well educated, the well mannered and well spoken person. That's what lures people into the trap of error. Like an angel of light, as Paul describes it.

John calls such a person the liar and the antichrist. And there were lots of them in John's day, just as there are in our day – deceivers. So for the church, the church today, these are times that try

men's souls. But I don't think we should think this is an unusual time in that regard. The church always faces that kind of challenge.

John calls such a person a liar and we need to be on the alert for such individuals, because they are clever. And nevertheless, the distinction between truth and error and life and death is clear. We're not at a disadvantage in that regard. John says it is the one who confesses the Son that has the Father. Again, all of this was to reinforce in the minds and hearts of the people to whom John wrote this letter, that they were genuine. They had no reason to doubt their salvation, but to be encouraged in their salvation. They had the Father. They were the ones who were the children of God. They were the ones who walked in the light.

So having stated his confidence in them and reinforced them to live the Christian life and live it boldly, John now instructs them to do that. He instructs them how to do that, how to carry on the fight against the antichrists and defend against their heresy.

He does that in verses 24-27, first by telling them to stick to the gospel, first by telling them to stick to the gospel. "Let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning." In other words, don't be distracted by this new gospel, which isn't a new gospel at all. It's the old lie. Hold fast to the old gospel. Hold fast to the old truth. It's really the counsel that Jeremiah gave in his day when he told the people to walk in the ancient paths, where the good way is. They'd stumbled off the ancient paths and were on to what Jeremiah called bypaths – wrong paths.

There's something alluring about the new and the novel. Often of course, new discoveries are good. Science blesses us with that, with a new understanding of the world around us and in every walk of life, what's new is bringing a good to us and blessing. We're not reactionary against that. We shouldn't oppose progress. We favor it.

But there's no progress spiritually on the wrong path. And the right path, the good way, is the gospel. Which in its widest sense, is the entire word of God, all 66 books of the Bible. It's not only our

path, it's the light on our path, according to Psalm 119, where the psalmist says, "That light makes us wiser than all our teachers."

The Scriptures are God's light. They are His revelation. It is truth. The only way to measure what is good and to separate the right from the wrong is by the standard of this book. It's by the standard of the word of God, the scriptures.

And that alone, John says in verse 25, has the promise of eternal life. So we must not depart from the word of God and specifically from the gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. We must let God's word abide in us, as John tells us to do. Let it live in us and control us and change us. That's what the scriptures do.

They're alive and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. They dissect our soul and they explain ourselves to ourselves. We understand who we are and what needs to change. It shows us the right path. It feeds our souls. It makes us wise. It makes us discerning and increasingly like Jesus Christ in our character.

Now, it doesn't do that by itself. The word of God is self-authenticating, just like the Son is self-authenticating. It's a sunny day out. We go out after the service. You look up, you don't have to debate with your friend or your wife if the sun is out. Is it noon or is it midnight? I can't tell. We know implicitly what it is. The sun's out. There's no debate about that. And the word of God is self-authenticating in that sense. The truth of it shines through.

We know it. We just know it. We just know it if we have eyes to see it, if we have spiritual ability. Otherwise, if we don't we're blind to it, just as a person who doesn't have eyes can't see the sun.

Well, we need spiritual eyes to see the truth of God's word and we need a teacher to guide us, and we have that through the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit. That's the second weapon of defense that John cites in verse 27. Perhaps it would be better to say the agent of defense and protection, the Holy Spirit.

"As for you," he writes, "the anointing which you received from Him abides in you." This word, "anointing," is related to the word "Christ." The Anointed One, or Messiah, the Anointed One. The kings and the priests of Israel would be anointed with oil. The prophets of Israel would be anointed with oil. And it was a way of showing that God had chosen them for that office. And not only that, He had equipped them so that oil and anointing became a symbol of the Spirit of God.

And this is what John is speaking of here when he speaks of the anointing. He's speaking of the Holy Spirit. He must have been thinking of the instruction that Jesus gave in the upper room when He promised that He would ask the Father and He would send them another helper, whom He said would be the Spirit of Truth. That's the anointing, the Holy Spirit. And Jesus said, "He will teach you all things."

John mentioned the anointing earlier in verse 20. "You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know." Every believer has a basic knowledge of the Christian faith. The Spirit has given that to us. So John says, "You have no need for anyone to teach you." He doesn't mean the church doesn't have need for teachers. We do. The scriptures are clear about that. Even teachers need teachers.

You have to read this and the statement that John makes here in its context. And what John means here is we are all equipped to understand the word of God. We need the word of God. It is absolutely necessary for our lives. The more we study it, the more the Spirit teaches us and causes us to grow. He has equipped us with the ability to do that. He has equipped us with the ability to read this and understand it, because we have a new mind in Christ. We have spiritual eyes to see. And we have a teacher within us to direct us and give us understanding of the word of God. And the more we do that, the more we grow.

And what he's saying here is, though, we don't need anyone outside of the church, outside of the truth, regardless of his or her

credentials to do that. We don't need anyone outside of the fellowship of Christ to build you up in the faith, those who don't have the anointing. We have that. We have it because we have the Spirit. And because we have the Spirit, we are able, through the word of God, to distinguish truth from error.

The Spirit and the word enable the believer to live wisely and well in these challenging days of moral confusion when truth is thought to be relative and is described in that way. In fact, oftentimes you hear it said, "Your truth and my truth, and we have our truth," as though there's no real truth. It's whatever you hold to be truth, that's your truth.

Well, what a blessing that by God's grace we have what is absolute truth – God's word, His inherent word. We have it in this book, 66 books. It's a library of God's inherent truth, His revelation, and we have the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, within us, within our hearts. Every believer is sealed with the Spirit of God to teach us and guide us.

So John ends by telling his friends to abide in Him. We do that by staying steadfast in the truth, studying and believing and obeying the word of God, which the Spirit makes effective in us. It's by staying in that old path, those certain paths of the word of God, that keeps us from straying into those bypaths and following the false teachers.

Horatius Bonar was a minister in the free church of Scotland in the 1800s, who, along with his brother Andrew and friend Robert Murray M'Cheyne and others, had a very influential ministry among the Jews. He wrote of being in Jerusalem and visiting the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where he was allowed to examine the sword of the crusader Godfrey.

And army officer was with him, and the army officer who was quite adept with the sword, took that sword and tried it out. He demonstrated it with all the various moves and strokes of swordsmanship. And he declared that it was a first-rate sword. He said

it was so well adjusted and balanced that the weight of every stroke always fell toward the point. So each move was easy and accurate.

Bonar wrote, "So it is with the sword of the Spirit. There we find a sword tempered and adjusted to deliver always a true stroke in the most effective of all ways." Well, that's the sword of the Spirit. That's the word of God as taught and directed by the Holy Spirit. It is the main means that God uses for strengthening our souls, for dissecting our souls, and helping us to understand ourselves and to correct ourselves. It's the main means that He uses for defending ourselves against the error that is around us. It's the authority of our lives. Studying the Bible, believing it, obeying it, walking by the Spirit, puts us in the right paths and gives us the best life. The world will tell you differently, but that's what the word of God teaches, and it will be demonstrated in your life as you do it, as you live it, as you follow it.

We live in trying times. Antichrists are everywhere. It's easy to shrink from service and become a summer soldier. But we must resist that, recognize who we are, and what our task in life is, and engage in it. Fight the foe of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

And what should encourage us to do that is it is the last hour. We are living on the edge of it. Anytime the Lord may come. Let's be ready for that. If you're here without Christ, you aren't ready. The only way to prepare for the end is through faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. Don't let the world deceive you. Listen to the Spirit. Believe the Bible. Trust in Christ. He died for sinners so that everyone who believes in Him will be saved, and everyone who believes in Him will be saved and saved forever. So come to Christ. And you who have done that, I hope, I trust it's everyone in here. Rest in Him and fight the good fight. We'll do that by God's grace. Let's close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank You for Your goodness to us. We thank You for the opportunity we have to be together in this Lord's day to open the word of God, to study it and to be reminded of these

important truths. We live in trying times, at times that do test the souls of Your people. The church has always lived in those times, though, and the challenge has always been there for Your people, but You have equipped us. You have the Spirit of God and we have the word of God. May we become or continue to be and increase in being men and women of Your word, faithful to it. We pray and we pray these things in Christ name. Amen.