



Focus Points...*For 1 John 2*

Listen...

- * To how John goes back to the very basics of Christianity: repentance, forgiveness, obedience and watchfulness to encourage his hearers to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and the Gospel.

Prayer:

Every time I reflect on Your grace, Lord, how can I not be thankful? As I consider Your loving sacrifice and unending forgiveness for me, move my heart to serve You in the joyful obedience of Christian faith. In Your name I pray. Amen.

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Commentary:

“My dear children...” (2:1). With these endearing words John expresses the simple purpose of this letter. “I write this to you so that you will not sin.” (2:2).

John’s greatest concern for his hearers is not merely that they not sin, but that they walk in obedience to Jesus’ commands. In his epistle, the Apostle James wrote, “faith without deeds is dead.” (James 2:26)

John, who walked with Jesus for three years wrote, “Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did” (2:6). Using Jesus’ own representation of light and darkness to represent good and evil, John’s message is unmistakably clear.

“Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.” 2:9-10

That was one of the main problems John addressed: Christians weren’t loving one another as Christ loved them. Paul addressed the same problem in his letters, most notably at Corinth (1 Corinthians 13). Getting Christians to forsake the darkness and live in the light was a daily challenge in the early Church, even as it is today. Even today, the most telling benchmark of true Christian faith and obedience in the believer is exactly what John suggested: Do you love your brother?

Ever the loving brother, John reminded his hearers of Jesus’ forgiveness at least twice in this chapter. The first instance is in 2:1-2.

“But if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

The second is in 2:12.

“I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of His name.”

Why did John place such a strong emphasis on forgiveness? The two most obvious reasons are:

- 1) One’s relationship with Christ is always dependent on Jesus’ forgiveness. The reminder of His grace is a reminder that Christians live in the joy and peace of God’s forgiveness, regardless of their sins.
- 2) The only truly God-pleasing motivation for obeying God is a heart full of never-ending thanks for God’s undeserved grace.

I John 2:18 contains the first reference to “antichrist” in the Scriptures. Only John uses this designation for Satan’s instruments of evil in the world. John used “Antichrist” in two ways. He used it to reference the final Antichrist (note the capitalization) who will come as part of the final tribulation before Jesus’ second coming.

John also used “antichrist” (note that this is not capitalized) to refer to multitude of Satanic-motivated persons. Many have pointed to various antichrists which have appeared in the world’s history. Such individuals range from the Roman Emperors Nero and Domitian, Adolph Hitler, and the Roman Catholic Papacy. No doubt, the Catholic Church of Luther’s Day considered Luther to be an antichrist.

Who are the “antichrists”? How can they be recognized? John provides a simple, but pointed, description.

First, they are those who come in the “last hour” (2:18). Their presence indicates that we live in the last times (cf. Matthew 24-25).

Second, John noted, antichrists are Trojan horses. They live within the church with one singular purpose: to destroy it. They “went out from us, but they did not really belong to us” John wrote (2:19).

Third, antichrists are “liars.” They cause people to turn from the Truth and believe some other lie.

Fourth, antichrists deny that Jesus is the Christ. “The man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist.” (2:22)

Fifth, antichrists deny the fundamental belief in the Trinity, necessary for salvation. “He denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also. (2:22-23)

Many people today are preoccupied with the coming Antichrist. However, their obsession for the final Antichrist often blinds them to the many antichrists among them. Should Christians be paranoid? Certainly not!

Christians be ever watchful and vigilant. They ought to continually test those among them whose charming eloquence often masks their evil designs. Unless Christians correct those who distort the Truth, the Church will fall.

John wrote this letter to warn his “children.” He loved them and did not want them to fall. John urged them to repentance, reminded of God’s grace, and energized them into faithful obedience to the Truth.

“And now, dear children, continue in Him, so that when He [Jesus] appears we may be confident and unashamed before Him at His coming.” (2:28).

This was John’s plea for Christians of every age...including you and me. In his fatherly manner, John urged all his hearers to continue in God’s truth, walk obedient in the light and love one another as Jesus loved them. Beware of the Antichrist and the many antichrists. They have just one purpose: to destroy your faith.

Prayer:

Lord, give me the insight and discernment to watch those who would lead me away from the Truth of God’s Word. I know how easily I can be deceived by my worldly desires and affections to follow those charismatic individuals who talk the talk of deception. Move me to greater obedience and desire to grow in Your Word. Send Your Spirit to keep me strong and in truth that I and Your Church may be faithful until You come again. In Your name I pray. Amen.

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