

1 John 2

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 06 July 2005

Preacher: Alex Bedford

[0 : 00] Well, today is the second week in our series on 1 John. It's a four-week series and you've got the text in front of you.

It's quite a dense text and you might worry that that's going to take quite a long time to read. Well, we'll be selective. I'll just read it from chapter 2 verse 15 to chapter 2 verse 25 and I'll be referring to the rest of the text during our talk.

Do take it home with you and read it in your own time at home. So 1 John chapter 2 verse 15. John says, Do not love the world or the things of the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is of the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions is not from the Father but is from the world.

And the world is passing away along with its desires but whoever does the will of God abides forever. Children, it is the last hour and as you have heard that Antichrist is coming, so now many Antichrists have come.

[1 : 07] 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 lies 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. Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.

And this is the promise that he made to us. Eternal life. Good. Well, if you were with us last week you might remember that John encountered Jesus.

[2 : 25] Yes, he was around at the Incarnation and the Apostle John says, I touched him with my hands. And I know that there's one or two here. You weren't actually with us last week.

So I'll just read the first three verses from 1 John. That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and have touched with our hands.

Do you see all John's senses? If this was a children's talk, Agnes, I'd be saying, how many senses are involved here? We've got five senses. How many senses is John using?

And John goes through his senses concerning the word of life. The life was made manifest. That's the Incarnation he's talking about. And we have seen it and testified to it and proclaimed to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.

That which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you so that you too have fellowship with us. And indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

[3 : 31] So John's communicating to us here, he's proclaiming that he's had an encounter with Jesus Christ in time, space, history. I touched him with my hands and he's proclaiming to us here in Glasgow that revelation of God so that it comes rolling through the centuries towards us and it falls into our laps.

That's what we have. That yellow piece of paper. They're living words from the Apostle John. So that, chapter 1, verse 3, you too may have fellowship with God the Father and God the Son, says John.

You might also remember from last week John's writing style. There's a lot of antithesis in this letter. John doesn't mint his words.

I'm sure if he was outside on Buchanan Street, you know, trying to get into conversations with people, making announcements, he'd soon be locked up for inciting religious hatred.

You know, Jesus was, wasn't he? 2005, well, no, it was less than that, wasn't it? Because he was around 30 years old. But Jesus, Jesus in his ministry, he was arrested for inciting religious hatred, for showing people the truth.

[4 : 50] And this is what John's doing here. His clarity is cutting. You remember he speaks in absolutes, contrasting one thing with the other. Listen to this. Life or death.

Darkness or light. Truth or lies. Children of God or children of the devil. And isn't that shocking? To our ears. Death.

Lies. Children of the devil. It's sort of Genesis chapter 3 type language, isn't it? You know, cast your mind back. And Adam is made in God's image, but he chooses to follow the devil's lies.

And friends, that's you and me. Yes, it is. We've acquiesced. We've joined Adam in his rebellion against the creator.

And we should slunk away into hell, you and me. Yes, we should. Exclusion from our creator is our choice. It's what we're doing as we sin.

[5 : 51] We're excluding God. Am I right? That's what we're doing when we sin. But we hear God speak. Good news. Genesis chapter 3 verse 15.

And it's an embryonic promise about overcoming the devil. Crushing him. And if we ask the apostle John, if we ask him this question, if we ask him, what was the incarnation all about?

If we ask him that question, his answer is Genesis chapter 3 verse 15, but with New Testament clarity. Just read his answer for yourselves and see if I'm right.

It's there in front of you. Chapter 3 verse 8. It's halfway through verse 8, beginning with the. Just look. Do you see it? The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

Do you see? So we ask John, we say, why did Jesus come? And he says, to destroy the works of the devil. Do you see that? And as Christians, we're caught up in this mission of the church to destroy the works of the devil.

[7 : 03] Do you see? It's as big as that. And that's the substance of our two points today. We've got two points. As Christians, listen, we're bringing into the present the victory that will be comprehensively seen by everybody on the last day.

Think about Jesus. He was doing that. He was doing the same thing in his incarnation, wasn't he? Fulfilling Genesis chapter 3 verse 15.

Showing us what it looks like. So we've got two points. And our first point, if you follow this, has two sub-points.

So our first point is rejecting the devil's lies. And A, we look first of all at rejecting the lies of the world. Have a look with me at verse 15, the first verse there.

Look at that. It's almost as if John shouts, I think, this. Look, verse 15. Do not love the world, says John. It's like he's sort of, he's emphatic, isn't he, to us.

[8 : 10] And we can, well, we can come to church, but we can have all sorts of things going on in the background, can't we? All sorts of things behind the scene. Drawing our love, cultivating our egos, and sadly, denying our status.

For all that is in the world, verse 16, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride in possessions, is not from the Father, but is from the world, says John.

The pride of possessions. Yes, we acquire things, don't we? You know, we do need things for our lives, houses, and cars. We need the shopping from Asda each week, don't we?

Jesus, think about Jesus. He acquired a donkey. It's, you know, it's not the, the problem isn't acquisition. The problem is our pride in the temporal things of this world.

Think about this, friends, our acquisitions, am I right? Our acquisitions will cost money. That's a normal pattern, isn't it? I know there's exceptions, but the normal pattern is our acquisitions cost money.

[9 : 22] And so, think about this, the flow of our money will tell us a lot here. Just imagine, the postman drops the bank statement through the letterbox.

Are you familiar with that? It happens to me every month. Drops the bank statement through the letterbox. And just imagine this. We make the Apostle John a cup of coffee, and he sits down with

us as we open up the bank statement.

What would he think? What would the Apostle John think about the flow of our money? What are our priorities? And this is a real question for all of us to be thinking through. How do the things of eternity feature in our bank statements?

What would John think? You know, what would he think if he looked at the flow of our money? What are our priorities? So, the Apostle John, he finishes looking at our bank statement, and what does he do?

Well, he gets this ink stamp out of his pocket. Always carries it with him. I'm making this up. And he gets our checkbook out, and he stamps the checkbook, and it's there, the beginning of verse 15, the stamp.

[10:37] Just look, how many words? Five words. Do not love the world, he puts on the checkbook. And he gets a little roll of stickers out as well, and he peels the sticker off, and he puts it on our card. Have you got a card?

He puts it on the card. Do not love the world, verse 15. So that every time we come to making a financial decision about acquiring something, we're forced to think through these things.

Every time we come to buy something, we need to reflect, don't we, on our stewardship of money.

And Satan, he says to Jesus, all these things I will give you.

Will Jesus love the world like we tend to? And Jesus says to Satan, what does he say? He says, Be gone, Satan. Satan. For it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.

And yes, friends, we fail, don't we? You and me. We fail. But Jesus doesn't. And it's the Amen of Genesis, chapter 3, verse 15.

[11:46] And John's wanting, listen, John's wanting his victory, his victory transported into our lives this very week. He wants our affection. Verse 17, look at the perspective of this.

The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

See the antithesis again, friends. The world is passing away, God abides forever.

Where is your investment? Before I was a Christian, it was a long time ago, I was in the north of Germany in a port called Trevor Monday and I was going to Sweden and I was queuing up with all the cars, probably like you do on going to some of the islands in Scotland.

You know the scene, don't you? You're waiting for the ferry. And I was looking out and I saw this Porsche and what was worse, the driver was about my age. I thought, how can he afford a Porsche and I can't afford it?

And so I was coveting this Porsche and my curiosity got the better of me. So I got out, I was in a van, I got out of the van and I walked up and I started looking around the Porsche, hoping I could get into some sort of conversation and find out the source of his income.

[12:58] That's what I wanted to know. So I was looking around and he got out of his car and he spoke perfect English. He was German, spoke absolutely perfect English and he was telling me all the specifications, it's top speed, it's acceleration, all those sort of things and I was drooling.

And I wanted to know where his income came from. I asked him what he did for a living so I'm getting a bit closer. He says, I work for a company and we've got offices in Germany and we've got offices in Sweden and I travel between the two.

And I says, well that must be a well paid job. And he looked at me, I wasn't a Christian, he looked at me in the eyes in perfect English and he said, money is all relative.

And I was absolutely pole lax. I can remember it now, I didn't know what to say. What do you say when somebody says something as profound as that to you? I thought, well he's right.

You know, if I could afford a Porsche, I'm sure after a few months the smell of the newness would wear off, you know, and I'd be looking for something else, wouldn't I? If I seek satisfaction in the things of this world, we sort of reach a point, don't we, where we think we're going to be satisfied and it just sort of evaporates like a mist in front of us.

[14:12] Am I right? That's the sort of thing. You see, God won't allow us to find ultimate satisfaction in the things of this world. We're too big for that. We're made for himself.

And John's asking if we've grasped that yet. He's saying, where are you investing your soul? That's the question he's asking us here in this passage. And it's again a very Genesis chapter 3 sort of question, isn't it?

John's saying, lift your horizons. It's not human to be trying to find satisfaction on the horizontal level, the fruit of the tree. That's all temporary, says John, passing away. Destructions on the cards, verse 17, if you have a look. And Jesus says, what does Jesus say? He says, he says, what good is it if you gain a whole world and lose your soul? Isn't he? And we've just sung there verse 4, riches I heed not, nor earth's empty praise. You my inheritance, now and always, all of your treasure to me you impart, high king of heaven, the first in my heart.

[15:17] And is that the song in your heart this day? Our second sub-point B is rejecting the lies of false religion.

And that's chapter 2 from verses 18 to 27. And John's writing into a situation of false teaching. And we'll see that in verse 26. Look at verse 26.

I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. You know. He's gone to great lengths, hasn't he, in the early chapter. In chapter 1, the first three verses, a lot of the commentators say the first four verses of chapter 1 are the foundation for the whole of the letter.

John's gone to great lengths to describe the Jesus Christ that he knows. And he's telling us now, he's telling us that there's going to be false teaching even within the church.

And he's addressing that in verses 18 and 22. Look at the type of false teaching there is. Children, it is the last hour, verse 18. And as you have heard that Antichrist is coming, so now many Antichrists have come.

[16:25] Therefore, we know that it is the last hour. And just cast your eyes to verse 22 now. Who is the liar? But he who denies Jesus is the Christ. This is the Antichrist, he who denies Father and the Son.

So there's strange teaching in the church, isn't there, that John's writing his letter into. This is the situation. People are denying the Jesus of the incarnation, the Jesus that John encountered.

And it's the Jesus from the beginning that they're denying. Chapter 1, verse 1. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, chapter 1, verse 3.

And John says they're Antichrist. That's the word he uses. Now, how might we identify such people? And John says, beware of people going out of the church.

We see that in verse 19. Verse 19, they went out, they're not of us. And he repeats it. Verse 19, they went out, they're not of us. Just look at verse 19. They went out from us, but they were not of us.

[17:35] For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, says John, that it might become plain that they are not of us. Do you see? So these people left the church.

That means they're not Buddhists, they're not Hindus, they left the church. Does that ring any bells with the cults of today? Does it? They broke from the church at some point.

And the defining issue is who Jesus is. That's why they left. And there's more. It seems these cults are claiming some sort of special knowledge.

They're claiming access to special spiritual truth. And John counters that in verses 20 and 21. Look down there. But you have been, John's contrasting, isn't he?

He's talking to the church here. 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.

[18:33] And because no lie is of the truth. You've got the Holy Spirit, says John, the full revelation of God. There isn't any more to have.

You've got everything, John's saying. So, these false teachers, they left the church. The defining issue was about who Jesus is.

And also, on top of that, they're claiming some sort of special knowledge. Some sort of revelation from God that's outside of the Bible. And the Watchtower Society fits that description, doesn't it?

Or the Mormons. Or all manner of lesser known cults. John says, beware of the spin. He says, Christians, beware of the spin.

And this is the gravity of their lives. Look at verse 23. Look how big it is. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

[19:36] No one who denies the Son has the Father, says John. It's the Trinity. You can't pull the Trinity apart. That's what he's saying. Do you see?

Do you see? If they deny the Son, think about this, think about these false teachers. If they're denying the Son, they're denying the only way to the Father, aren't they? Do you see? Does that make sense? It's the only basis on which they can have a relationship with God the Father is through his Son. So they've lost a lot. No one comes to the Father except through me, says Jesus in John chapter 14.

And John now is speaking to us, those who haven't gone out. And in verse 24, he starts using a lovely verb. It's the verb abide.

It's really nice. It's the antithesis of went out, isn't it, if you think about it. And verse 24, it grabs our attention because in the Greek it starts with the word you.

[20 : 41] Look at verse 24. You, let what you heard from the beginning abide. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.

Isn't that a very nice verse, friends? Abiding in the Son and abiding in the Father. Let what you heard abide in you.

That's what John did, isn't it? He heard and the word abided in it and he's proclaiming it to us. And then he says we'll all abide in the Son and in the Father.

Part of the family of God. Who in their right mind would go out from that? Friends, is there anyone here, you know, you've been bombarded lately with the teaching of cults.

You've been doubting who Jesus is. Perhaps even thinking of going out. John, he remembers two words that he heard from Jesus and they're there at the end of verse 25.

[21 : 48] It's what false teaching can't give you. There's just two words, look at verse 25 at the end there. And this is the promise that he made to us. Eternal life, do you see?

Perhaps those two words are for somebody here today. Eternal life, says John. So briefly, our final point is practicing God's truth.

So it's seen that we need to believe the right things and now it's about practicing the right things. Remember, Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and being Christians we're to live that way.

Look at chapter 3 verse 9 just as we close. Chapter 3 verse 9. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning for God's seed abides in him and he cannot keep on sinning because he is being born of God.

You see? David Jackman writes this, he says, the new birth involves such a radical change at the heart of our experience that whereas sin used to come naturally to us now it is unnatural to continue in sin.

[22 : 58] Of course we do slip up now and again chapter 1 verses 8 and 9 but we can come to Christ can't we? For forgiveness. You know friends, if you met the Jesus that John met would he abide in you like this?

You'd want, wouldn't you? You'd want, if you knew Jesus so intimately you'd want his mission to be your mission and that's verse 8 isn't it? Verse 8, we want that to be ours.

Verse 8, the reason the son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil and as Christians that's us, that's what we're caught up in. Good, shall we pray?

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for this letter and we just pray that you'd make these words pertinent to us. Maybe there's something that we need to take with us, especially today into our own situations.

So we pray that you go with us now and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of his spirit be with us now and forevermore. Amen.