

1 JOHN 2:24-29

INTRODUCTION

Starting some new venture or idea is relevantly easy. Perhaps you think that you need to lose weight you start a diet and for the first few days and weeks you keep to it and you lose some weight. The hard bit is sticking to it being disciplined all the time for the weeks and months that it takes. It might be you plan to get fitter start doing some physical exercise but the hard part is sticking to it. You might start some new education programme but again the hard part is sticking to it.

This is also true when it comes to spiritual discipline. We intend to read more or pray more or be more consistent in our attendance at the means of grace. We start off well but the crunch comes when we have to continue day after day week after week.

Do you remember when you were first saved? The thrill and excitement of having our sins forgiven and having a relationship with God. Learning new truth about God gripped us and we looked forward to going to church and reading our bibles because it was all so new to us. But after that initial period things level out a little and life becomes more routine and perhaps less exciting. The longer we go on in the Christian life then the more unlikely it is that we will discover anything new about God. We have been taught the truth, believe it and although we still have questions in our minds generally speaking we never think twice about the truths we have known for a long time. For us now the Christian life is one of plodding, we know the truth but what is it that keeps us on the right course?

How can we who are at the plodding stage in our Christian experience make sure that we do not get sidetracked and follow after new teaching which might be tempting for it rekindles the excitement that we had at the beginning when we were learning new truth. There are plenty of false teachers in our world who are offering us all sorts of new experiences; experiences, which they claim, will make us better Christians. How do we grow and develop and mature as Christians while at the same time resisting the lure of new but false teaching? That is the question that we are looking today.

1. LET GOD'S TRUTH REMAIN IN US. (vs.24-25).

Verse 24 in the Greek starts with the word 'you.' It is placed at the beginning so as to contrast the true church with the false teachers of verses 22-23 who deny that Jesus is the Christ. These believers know the truth unlike the false teachers, now John wants that truth to remain in them. The verb translated 'remain' or 'continue' or in some versions 'abide' is used frequently in these verses. It comes three times in verse 24 alone. The word means to take up a permanent address or to make a settled home.

What John is saying is that if we want to keep going and keep true to Christ then we must make sure that the truth which we have heard and received at the beginning of our Christian experience must be allowed to take up a permanent residence in our hearts and minds. God's word must be able to be at home within our lives. What this

means is that we do not need to be taught new truth but we need to be pondering the great truths of the bible those great doctrines that amazed us when we heard them at the beginning.

We need to be learning how those great truths affect our thinking and our lifestyle in general. Modern Christians are more concerned with experiences than we are with spending time and effort mediating upon the deep truths of our faith. Sadly the average Christian today spends little time thinking about God and his great salvation and this is because our own culture does not encourage us to think thoroughly and to ponder truth. Our age is one of instant truth we are spoon-fed and rather than taking time to think and study on that truth we have moved on to something else. This is probably seen in our quiet times if we have one. Our Quiet times might consist of a reading and then we get some thought out of it and move on.

We probably rarely spend time thinking about that thought trying to study it further, or trying to allow it just to sink into our hearts and minds. We are a moving society and so we get our thought and move on. If we were asked what we read this morning we might not be able to tell anyone. What John is saying is that if you mediate and ponder the great truths about God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit and salvation to name just a few then we should expect to grow as Christians for God's truth will be making its home in our hearts.

This involves discipline, we must discipline our time so that we make time to allow God's word to go to work in our lives as the Holy Spirit applies that truth to us and engraves it within our mindset of life. You don't learn to play a musical instrument without discipline and the Christian walk needs discipline so that God's truth takes root within our lives. The result of this will be that we will abide or remain in Christ and in God the Father. In other words the way to refute error and know assurance of salvation, which is what this letter is all about, is to let God's truth remain in us. For when God's truth is in us then; so are the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit. The result of remaining in the Son and in the Father is that we receive what God promised even eternal life (v 25). When we enter into a personal relationship with God through his Son Jesus Christ we receive eternal life both in this world and in heaven itself.

Eternal life is not just life everlasting but it is a quality of life that we know and experience through our walk with God. Eternal life begins here and now as God's Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives. We therefore have God's life within us. We know something of God's future inheritance now, there is so much more to come but we do have eternal life now. Therefore the way that we enjoy this eternal life is to see that God's truth remains in us, we do this when his truth takes priority within our lives.

We never outgrow our need for God's fundamental truths those basic doctrines that we learned when we were first converted. We need to keep reminding ourselves of them, mediate upon them and allow them to take root and permanent residence in our thinking and in our living.

2. LET GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT TEACH US (vs.26-27)

Once again there is a contrast being made here between the false teachers and the true believers. The false teachers were trying to lead people astray (v 26). The Greek word that is used means 'to wander,' the false teachers were seeking to get people to wander from the real church. They were offering new experiences of God based on an anointing of the Holy Spirit which they claimed brought them into a deeper relationship with God, one in which special knowledge was given to those who were in with this inner circle.

This is how many false religions and erroneous Christian groups work today offering us something else above what we already have. A deeper knowledge or a secret knowledge of God or some sort of new experience. But John contrasts the church with these false teachers and tells the church that they have received God's anointing and that is more than sufficient. In the Old Testament God's anointing was symbolic of the grace of God being poured out on the King or Priest in order to equip them for some task or ministry.

John's thought here is that the New Testament church has been equipped with that same grace to live for God by the power of the Holy Spirit. They have all that they need to hold on to God's truth and to avoid caving in to the false teachers. Just as we needed the work of the Spirit to bring us to the truth we continue to need the work of the Spirit to keep us in that truth. Therefore they do not need anyone to teach them (v 27).

Now clearly John cannot mean that they have no need for teaching from a person for that is exactly what John is doing in his letter. What he means is that the Holy Spirit is the divine teacher given to every Christian. He is the one who leads us into the apostolic truth therefore we do not need some false teacher to lead us into some additional secret knowledge. The Holy Spirit is the author of the apostolic truth and it is this written truth that He uses to teach us.

He does use human teachers but there is nothing hidden in God's word that we need someone who has had a special anointing to teach us. If we have God's word in our hands and the Holy Spirit in our hearts then we have everything we need to understand and uphold truth. Even if we were in a situation where we had no human teachers we would have everything we need to understand God's truth and to grow in that truth. Therefore the application for the church in John's day and for us is that we do not need to go after new ideas or new experiences, which are promoted by various so-called Christian groups today.

What we need to is stay steadfast to the truth and allow the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts as he takes that truth and applies it to our minds, hearts and life often in fresh ways.

3. OUR MOTIVATION FOR REMINING IN THE TRUTH (vs. 28-29).

John once again urges the church to continue or remain in their relationship with Christ. But now he gives them a reason or a motivating factor for doing so. This world will last only a short time John acknowledges (v 18) that we are in the final

phase of history therefore we have to have our eyes not fixed on this world but fixed on Christ's return. He is going to appear and we all meet him. Will it be a day of intense joy or will it be a tint of shame and regret.

Will we remain faithful to the truth now so that we will have confidence that when Jesus Christ returns we will hear those words well done good and faithful servant. The second coming is our motivation for remaining in the truth and for upholding the truth. The pressure on the church today to move away from the truth is intense and I believe it will become even greater as laws in our own land became less Christian. False teachers abound today offering us a more exciting Christian life, one filled with blessings and few hardships.

But if we have our eyes on the return of our Lord then this will help us to resist the temptation to go after appealing false teachings. For if we do we will one day stand before our Lord and on that day we will be greatly ashamed because we did not remain faithful to his truth.

But what about the here and now what is the practical outworking of remaining in him in the here and now. The answer to that is given for us in verse 29. Right living is the answer. If we know the truth then we know that God is righteous therefore he acts righteously. Therefore everyone who is born of him that is everyone who is born again of the Holy Spirit of God does what is right.

If we belong to God and are holding to his truth then we will reflect something of God's righteous character in our own lives. Doing what is right means holding on to the truth against the onslaught of the false teachers and acting righteously as well. Such a lifestyle will give us confidence that we will not be ashamed when Christ returns. What we believe will affect how we live if we hold to God's word and do not abandon it for some false teaching then the evidence of that will be a righteous life.

But the opposite is true that if we do not hold to the truth then we will not live righteously for false doctrine leads to false practise.

So as I conclude it is important to know what we believe to be convinced by the truth and then to hold on to that truth. We must resist following false teaching which often dresses itself up in nice clothes and our whole motivation should be the return of the Lord. Our desire should be to live righteously and if we do that will be clear evidence that we belong to God.

Then we will be able to stand before Christ with confidence not in ourselves but in Christ and in his truth and stand before him without shame because by the goodness and grace of God we have held on to God's truth and lived that truth out within our everyday lives.

Amen