

We Must Abide in the Truth

2 John 7-11

I. Introduction (v. 7)

- A. In this short letter John has already encouraged the recipients to “know” (vv. 1-3) and “walk” (vv. 4-6) in the truth. Now as he concludes his thoughts he warns his readers to remain (abide) within the set boundaries of the truth.
- B. False teachers will try and bring believers outside of the confines of the truth. Once outside, believers have removed themselves from the protection afforded them “in Christ.” To protect us as individuals and as a congregation we must bind ourselves together in love, walk in Christ’s footsteps, and keep the commandments that have been given. These deceivers may not be strangers, indeed, the congregation may have intimate knowledge of some of these “deceivers.” (1 Jn. 2:18,19; Acts 20:30)
- C. The specific type of false teaching being warned about here is rejecting Jesus Christ as the God-Man. Of course in John’s time Judaism (as it does today) denied that Christ had come at all. The Gnostics denied that Jesus could come in the flesh.
- D. Anyone who would deny the incarnation of Jesus is styled by John as the deceiver and the antichrist. (1 Jn. 2:18, 22; 4:3) When someone approaches you wanting to discuss Christianity the first question you should ask is: What do you think about Christ; is He God come in the flesh? There are so-called Christians today who will say He hasn’t; these are antichrist. In general anyone teaching against Christ and His doctrine is antichrist. It is beyond the scope of this lesson to study “the antichrist” in much depth. Suffice it to say that anyone who would align themselves against the Lord’s church is “against Christ” and is certainly caught up in the spirit of the antichrist.

II. Discussion (vv. 8-11)

To “abide in the truth” means to remain true to the doctrines of the Christian faith. The false teachers of the first century presented the same danger as the false teachers of the twenty-first century. They had departed from the truth and the fellowship of believers and had it in their hearts to take as many believers with them as possible. The deceivers in the world present three dangers to the Christian and the local church.

- A. **The danger of going back** (v.8) – This passage clearly teaches that it is up to us as Christians to protect our own salvation by “taking an introspective look into our” minds and checking out the defenses that we have put into place. This verse

gives three plain lessons that explicitly show us that our souls are in danger if we go back:

1. The possibility of falling away from the truth.
2. The necessity of constant and careful self-examination.
3. The necessity of being “on the lookout” for Satan’s next onslaught.

One scholar translates this verse: “Do not lose the things we accomplished.” (Wuest)

B. The danger of going ahead (v. 9) – In this verse John clarifies just what it is we stand to lose: God Himself! We cannot proceed beyond (transgress = goes onward) the boundaries set for us by God through the Gospel of Christ. Conversely, we must abide (to stay in a place; to remain; to endure) in the doctrine of Christ. No deviation from His Divine standard is possible without apostasy.

1. Progressive vs. Fundamental – This passage teaches that we are not to be progressive when it comes to doctrine. Progress is only good when it is in the direction of Christ (Woods). Otherwise we are progressing away from the truth. The truth of the first century is the truth of today. The only safe and sufficient rule of faith to be found in the oracles of God.
2. True progress comes from remaining in the true teaching; this is where we will find the Father and the Son. Do the conditions existing in the world today call for a modernized approach? Was the New Testament intended to be the spiritual arrangement for all succeeding centuries? Can we use our own “sanctified common sense” in adapting the Gospel to the twenty-first century? (Gal. 1:6-8) If our “progress” leads us away from the truth as proclaimed by Christ then we will find ourselves outside the boundaries that God has set for us.

C. The danger of going with (vv. 10,11) – Christian fellowship and hospitality is to be denied to anyone that does not teach according to the doctrine of Christ. We know that we are to open our arms to visitors (Rom. 12:13; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:3-10; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:8-10); so to not extend this courtesy is for a serious reason.

1. The test supplied by John to his readers is this: Do these visitors advocate the teachings of Christ? Specifically, do they believe that Christ has come in the flesh? If not, then they are not to be extended the arms of fellowship. The Eastern greeting was more than just “hello,” it was an approval of the course being pursued by the one being greeted (Woods).
2. This greeting would be seen as approval by neighbors and fellow Christians who witnessed or heard of it. The severity of this injunction might lead one to misunderstand its intent. Please note:

- a. Hospitality to strangers is not forbidden. Even if we find a known minister of false doctrine suffering we are obligated to assist him as long as we do not aid or abet him in his false teaching.
- b. However, it is forbidden to receive a false teacher in such a way as to give them opportunity to teach their heresy. We must do nothing to support or encourage that which is not true. We must not subject ourselves to the danger of becoming corrupt because of an association with them.

III. Conclusion

- A. From verse seven we learn that John wrote these verses to combat the specific false doctrine mentioned there, namely, denying that Christ came in the flesh. By consulting John's other epistles as well as his Gospel, we understand that anyone taking any position that is "against Christ" is to be marked and avoided.
- B. In closing let us examine verses 5 and 6.
 1. John commands us to "love one another." Is it possible to command "love?" Absolutely, when we realize what true Christian love entails. This love is embodied in the Golden Rule: Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you. Christian love goes beyond the emotional aspect and is actually embodied in an act of our will. Our proper attitudes and actions lead us to be able to express true Christian love. It is this attitude of love that will help us deal properly with our brethren as well as false teachers.
 2. John also demands that we be obedient. It is only through obedience that we will learn more truth. It is mandatory then that we live a life of love, truth, and obedience that in turn will lead us to love more, seek more truth and obey that truth more fully. As Wiersbe puts it: We must get ourselves out of the "vicious circle" of the world and into the "victorious circle" of love, truth, and obedience. (Paraphrased BEC Vol. 2 p. 537.) This is the life of a true Christian.
- C. Do not go back to your old man of sin, do not go beyond the boundaries set by Jesus Christ our only Lord and Savior, do not go with teachers that deny even the very essence of the God-Man. As Christians we must train ourselves to be content with what Christ and His Apostles have taught us through the Holy Spirit given word. "Only the false teachers are compelled to eliminate or elaborate." (Eerdman's Handbook to the Bible 1974 ed. P.643)

[Guy N. Woods' *Commentary on the New Testament Epistles*, Vol. 7, pp. 344-51]

[Outline adapted from Wiersbe's *Bible Exposition Commentary*, Vol. 2, pp. 537-38.]