

Lesson 7 – 1 John 2:18-27

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Review/Introduction

John is writing so we might know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13); so they may see the objective truth and subjective evidences that give assurance of salvation. Both objective truth and subjective evidence go hand-in-hand. He is doing this by presenting tests to determine if true saving faith has been exercised or are the readers (and ultimately us) deceived. John is making it very clear that a profession of possessing salvation without the evidences that flow from salvation is self-deception.

John presents his tests in four spirals laying out doctrinal and conduct tests or evidences of true, real, actual regeneration. We finished the first spiral and now are starting the second.

III. Evidence of true saving faith – Spiral 2 (2:18-3:24)

- A. **Doctrine – Hold fast to truth – Don’t Apostatize (2:18-27)**
- B. Conduct – Christ’s coming is a purifying fixed hope (2:28-3:3)
- C. Conduct – Sin/obedience (3:4-10)
- D. Conduct – Love (3:11-18)
- E. Conduct – A conviction-free walk (3:19-24)

From the time of Christ (Judas) to the end of the age (tares among the wheat), there will be those who either through intention or self-deception are connected to bodies of believer, but are professors of salvation without possession. Sometimes it is easier to tell (as John shows us today); other times it is pre-manifestation and difficult to discern an apostate.

²¹“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. ²²Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ ²³And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’ (Matthew 7:21-23)

³⁶Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” ³⁷And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, ³⁸and the field is the world; and *as for* the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil *one*; ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, ⁴²and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁴³Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. (Matthew 13:36-43; see 13:24-30 for the parable)

Today, we begin the second spiral with a doctrine test. Are you rejecting lies; are you rejecting false teachers? And the contrast, do you know the truth and do you have the ability to know the truth because you have the Holy Spirit?

Spiral 2 – Doctrine – Hold fast to truth – Don’t Apostatize (2:18-27)

1. Antichrists’ Distinguishing Characteristic #1 – No Fellowship with Believers (2:18-19)

¹⁸Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹They 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.

¹⁸Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹They 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. (ESV)

John starts with “children” meaning a child young in experience and in need of training and discipline, not his more familiar “little children”. There is almost a sense of strong exhortation or mild rebuke to make sure they do not fall into the naivety of children believing the false teachers.

John states that “it is the last hour”. This is not a specific time, but the character of time between the first and second coming of Christ (specifically the beginning of the “Day of the Lord” – the rapture). The “Day of the Lord” is an extended period describing God’s judgement and wrath poured out on the earth from the rapture through the tribulation and second coming to the destruction of the universe at the end.

John had surely taught his readers that the antichrist was coming during the aspect of the Day of the Lord called the tribulation. But the fact that “many antichrists” have appeared indicates the end is imminent.

¹Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ²that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³**Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come unless the apostasy comes first***, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)

❖ **Are you looking forward to the rapture with anticipation and excitement?**

“Antichrist” means literally against Christ. The one that “is coming” is a future person in world history. He is the end-times false-messiah, the “man of lawlessness” (2 Thessalonians 2:3), who will achieve world domination during the tribulation and attempt to destroy Israel and the followers of Christ (Matthew 24:9; 22; Revelation 12:17). The peace treaty he signs with Israel is the beginning event of the tribulation (Daniel 9:24-27).

Even during John’s day “many antichrists had appeared” or “came into being” in contrast to the eternal Christ. John describes these people by comparing them to his original description of believers – fellowship with one another and fellowship with the Father and Son.

³what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, **so that you too may have fellowship with us**; and indeed **our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.** (1 John 1:3)

The first distinguishing characteristic of those who have apostatized is that they were once connected to a body of believers, but now have abandoned the body. “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.”

There are several reasons (or better excuses) why true believers might not be committed to a local body, but those reasons all boil-down to immaturity. The Scriptures are clear that the body of Christ gathers together for biblical teaching, fellowship, remembering Christ’s sacrifice, and prayer.

⁴²They were **continually devoting themselves** to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)

The Christian life is designed by God to be lived in community.

^{24b}whereas our more presentable members have no need *of it*. But **God has so composed the body**, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked, ²⁵so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another.

²⁶And **if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.** ²⁷Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it. (1 Corinthians 12:24b-27)

¹¹And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³until **we all attain** to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing **one another** with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

And believers are commanded to gather together.

²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵**not forsaking our own assembling together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

❖ **What is your commitment level to your local body?**

But immaturity is not what John is talking about here. John’s thought is perseverance. It is entirely possible that these antichrists began by thinking they were saved, but they were self-deceived as we have seen up to now in the epistle. The fact that they abandoned fellowship with the saints is an indication that they were never really in fellowship (union) with Christ or other believers. They were professors, but not possessors of salvation. Perseverance is a hallmark of true regeneration. A desertion of the faith is evidence of never having exercised true saving faith to begin with.

To be clear, this is not to simply stop attending a church or changing churches or missing a Sunday. It is acknowledging that they are no longer in union with the body. It is abandoning what you once held dear.

❖ **Are you (or are there times when you are) living disconnected from the body?**

2. Believer's Distinguishing Characteristic #1 – The Holy Spirit (2:20-21)

²⁰But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. ²¹I 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.

²⁰But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. ²¹I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. (ESV)

“But” again indicates a contrast. In contrast to the ones who were once associated with the body of Christ, but went out to show they were never of the body, if you have exercised the gift of true saving faith and been born again, you have something that demonstrates that you truly belong to the body.

“Anointing” literally means what has been spread on, such as an ointment. “Anointing” was the inaugural ceremony for priests (Exodus 28:37; 40:13; Leviticus 6:22; Numbers 35:25), kings (1 Samuel 9:16; 10:1; 15:1; 16:3, 13), and sometimes prophets (1 Kings 19:16). The “anointing” symbolized the imparting of the Holy Spirit.

¹²So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the Lord said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is he.” ¹³Then **Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.** And Samuel arose and went to Ramah. (1 Samuel 16:12-13)

¹**The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the Lord has anointed me** To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; ²To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, (Isaiah 61:1-2)

Use of this word in the NT is unique to John in this epistle (here in 2:20 and twice in 2:27). Here in verse 20, we see that it is “from the Holy One” or Christ. So, this is something that Christ gave. In verse 27, we see that the anointing abides in believers and does something to teach believers. Looking at both the OT and John’s use of “anointing” we understand that the “anointing” refers to the Holy Spirit who indwells believers.

“You have” grammatically indicates that the anointing (Spirit indwelling) is permanent.

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the act by which the Holy Spirit permanently (John 14:16-17; Ephesians 1:13-14) takes up residence in every believer (Romans 8:9; cf. Jude 1:19) at the moment of salvation (Ephesians 1:13-14; cf. Galatians 3:2) from sin.

¹⁶I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, **that He may be with you forever;** (John 14:16)

⁹However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. (Romans 8:9)

¹⁹These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, **devoid of the Spirit.** (Jude 19)

²This is the only thing I want to find out from you: **did you receive the Spirit** by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (Galatians 3:2)

¹⁹Or do you not know that **your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God**, and that you are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19)

¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. (Galatians 5:16-17)

Many NT passages describe the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (John 7:39; 14:16-17; Romans 5:5; 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Ephesians 1:13-14; James 4:5; 1 John 2:27).

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is an amazing spiritual blessing. When you exercised true saving faith in Christ as Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit permanently indwelt you. He functions as your helper, teaching you and guiding you in your spiritual growth toward righteousness. What a comfort and encouragement this is for the believer in Christ!

❖ **Do you avail yourself of God's resources to progress in sanctification?**

“Know” is not knowledge obtained by experience (gnosko), but is an intuitive knowledge. This is “intuitive” spiritual knowledge illumined by the anointing, the Holy Spirit. The idea is that the believers have access to the capacity to intuitively know that something is true as the Spirit illuminates our mind to understand and apply God's word.

¹⁰For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. ¹¹For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, ¹³which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*. (1 Corinthians 2:10-13)

❖ **When you engage God's word, do you rely on the Spirit for heart-level understanding?**

In context, one of the truths that John is thinking about is the nature of Christ.

3. Antichrist's Distinguishing Characteristic #2 – No Fellowship with Christ (2:22-23)

²²Who 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. ²³Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

²²Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. ²³No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. (ESV)

Another distinguishing characteristic of antichrists is that they deny that Jesus is the Christ. “Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also”. These are also the words of Jesus.

³²“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. ³³But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 10:32-33)

²³And He was saying to *them* all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ²⁴For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. ²⁵For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels. (Luke 9:23-26)

Jesus is the Christ or Messiah. The Messiah is the promised One who was born of a virgin, taught the gospel, performed miracles, died for sin, rose from the dead, and will come again in glory and judgment. Denying that He is Christ the Lord, places him in C.S. Lewis’ “liar” or “lunatic” categories.

“Denying” carries the idea of a conscious, purposeful action of the will and means to say “no”. “Denying” that Jesus is the Christ” is rejecting Christ. This is knowing the gospel and understanding who Christ is and what He has done and turning away in rejection. This is an apostate. This is someone who actively abandons what they formerly professed to believe.

❖ **Are you (or are there times when you are) living as if Jesus were not your Lord?**

We have to be clear. There is no middle ground regarding eternal destiny. It is all about Christ. Jesus said, “He who is not with Me is against Me” (Luke 11:23a). One’s eternal destiny is not dependent on believing in God, attending church, holding to a moral standard, being a “good” person, taking part in religious society, etc. It is all about Christ. Deny/reject Him and you have hell as your destiny; surrender to Him and you have heaven as your destiny. There is no middle ground.

4. Believer’s Distinguishing Characteristic #2 – Abiding (2:24-25)

²⁴As 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. ²⁵This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.

²⁴Let 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. ²⁵And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. (ESV)

The first word in the Greek is “you” setting up a contrast. In contrast to the antichrists who deny Christ, make sure you are believers. Make sure what you heard from the beginning is abiding in you.

“Abide” means to remain in the same place or position over a period of time. When used in relation to Christ, it implies relationship, fellowship, friendship, dependence, harmony, communion. John’s use is often synonymous with “fellowship” or “union”.

Here though, John does not start out with the thought to abide in Christ, but something abiding in us. Interesting that the NASB and ESV translate this as a passive thing done to us. But the first use of “abide” is an active, present-tense imperative. So really it is saying, “As for you, what you have heard from the beginning you must cause to continually keep on abiding in you.” The NET bible translates it “As for you, what you have heard from the beginning must remain in you.”

So, what is “what you have heard from the beginning”? This is the gospel. You must continually cause the gospel to abide in you. Remain in the gospel. Cause the gospel to continually remain in you. Don’t depart from the gospel, don’t be separated from the gospel, don’t be alienated from the gospel, don’t depend on anything else but the gospel.

❖ **Are you continually remembering the gospel?**

“If what you heard from the beginning abides in you” is a conditional clause that leaves open the fulfillment of the condition. It challenges us to ensure the gospel remains in us. If the gospel hypothetically remains in you, then it is demonstrated that you are redeemed and you will remain in the Son and in the Father. The reason is that Christ promised eternal life to all those that have the gospel remaining in them.

❖ **Is the hope of glory (eternal life) an anchor for your soul (Hebrews 6:19)?**

5. Antichrist’s Distinguishing Characteristic #3 – Deception (2:26)

²⁶These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

²⁶I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. (ESV)

The antichrists do not become apostate in private, they “are trying to deceive you”. They are trying to “lead astray” from that which God is making to abide in you and you too are making to abide in you, that is the gospel. Either the antichrists are consciously, continually, trying to make John’s readers to wander or they are the pawns of Satan who is seeking to deceive you.

❖ **Are you being influenced by deceivers?**

6. Believer’s Distinguishing Characteristic #3 – Holy Spirit Discernment (2:27)

²⁷As 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, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

²⁷But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him. (ESV)

In stark contrast to antichrists that are trying to deceive, deny Christ, and abandon the body, a true believer is indwelt with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit abides, remains, in the true believer. An apostate abandons, but a true believe remains because the Spirit indwells them.

One who is indwelt with the Spirit has “no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things”.

“Need” means a necessity, what is needed or the occasion of need.

“Teach” means to provide instruction in a formal or informal setting. We have to understand the biblical context of “teach” to make sure we understand John’s usage here.

This is what Jesus did.

²⁰Jesus answered him, “I have spoken openly to the world; I always **taught** in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret. (John 18:20)

This is what Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would do to the apostles.

²⁶But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will **teach** you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (John 14:26)

This is what the early church devoted themselves to (noun).

⁴²They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' **teaching** and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)

This is what "Paul and Barnabas and many others" did to build up the church at Antioch.

³⁵But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, **teaching** and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord. (Acts 15:35)

This was Paul's ministry focus in disciple making.

²⁸We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and **teaching every man** with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. (Colossians 1:28)

This is how to fulfill our disciple-making mission.

¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰**teaching** them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

This is what God has given for the purpose of building up the body of Christ.

¹¹And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and **teachers**, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)

This is how immature believers are brought to maturity.

¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to **teach** you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. (Hebrews 5:12)

This is a spiritual gift.

⁶Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷if service, in his serving; **or he who teaches, in his teaching**; ⁸or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8)

This is what Spirit-filled believers do to one another.

¹⁶Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom **teaching** and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

In context, we cannot think that “you have no need for anyone to teach you” means that teaching is not something that we need. What we don’t need is extra biblical revelation or teaching that is contrary to the word of God. The Holy Spirit, through His illuminating ministry in the hearts and minds of believers causes the word of God, truth, to be understood and applied (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). This is contrary to the “lies” of the deceivers.

- ❖ **Are you walking in the Spirit, saturated with God’s Word so you can be protected from false teaching?**
- ❖ **When you encounter supposed spiritual truth, do you rely on the Spirit to teach you truth from God’s word?**

John’s final exhortation is to abide, or remain, in Christ as you have been taught by the Holy Spirit. Don’t depart from Christ.

- ❖ **What active things are you doing to work to remain in Christ?**

Conclusion

John is writing to present tests of true saving faith. The purpose is to ensure that his readers know if they have eternal life (actual, true, real regeneration) or not. Today, we looked at apostasy and the contrast to abandoning which is abiding (remaining) because a true believer is indwelt with the Holy Spirit.

Additional Study

1. Each time you come to the Scriptures, pray for the Spirit to give you understanding.
2. Read 1 John once this week a chapter at a time (one chapter a day for five days).
3. Pray that God would show you personal applications from today’s passage.
4. Read today’s passage noting repeated words/ideas and ask yourself what John means.
5. Re-read the notes from today and contemplate the thought questions.