

(Evidence of Eternal Life - Part 5) Abiding in Christ

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon emphasizes the importance of remaining steadfast in one's faith and having a vital fellowship with Christ, and warns against the dangers of apostasy and the emergence of antichrists.

Duration: 43:50

Scripture: 1 John 2:19-20, 1 John 2:22-29

Topics: "Abiding In Christ", "Discerning Truth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of discernment and abiding in Christ, highlighting the dangers of falling away, the presence of antichrists, and the need to remain steadfast in the truth. It addresses the significance of having the anointing from the Holy One for discerning truth from error and the evidence of eternal life through abiding in Christ. The message underscores the critical need to stand firm in faith and resist seduction, recognizing the signs of those who are not truly of Christ.

Transcript

But they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us. But they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But you have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things.

I have not written unto you because you know not the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar? But he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ. He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son.

Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father. Let that therefore abide in you which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.

And this is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which you have received of him abideth in you, and you need not that any man teach you.

But as the same anointing teaches you of all things and is truth and is no lie, even as it has taught you, you shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have

confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him.

The main idea of this general epistle is still fellowship with God. That's what it's about. These things are written.

We might have fellowship with him, said John in the first verses, and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. So with that in mind, you'll understand that he is going to emphasize this again and again. In this portion I've read, verses 18 to 29, fellowship with God is still the main theme.

To remain is salvation. To go out is damnation. The Antichrist went out and sought to induce others to go out with him.

To remain steadfast to Christ requires that we resist the seducers, that we recognize truth, that we remain faithful to the truth, and that we rejoice in the prospect of his coming. Somewhere along the line, I ran into an outline, and as outlines sometimes have a way of doing, it stuck in my mind. I'm giving it to you and we'll try to follow it as time permits.

Now, I don't remember from whom I got it. I know it's not mine, and I don't know to whom credit should be given. I suppose I should do like one preacher said he did.

Whenever he started to speak, he went like this, and when he finished, he went like that. And he said it was quotation marks so that he could give full credit for everything that he had used. So I'll do the same now.

Verses 18 and 19, deserters. D-S-E-R-T-E-R-S, deserters. Verses 20, 21, discerners.

Verses 22 and, oh, too fast. All right. Verses 20 and 21, discerners.

Verses 22 and 23, deniers. Isn't that nice? Oh, I love alliteration. I heard about the cannon from a church in England who came to America, and when he got back, two ladies sitting in the congregation said, see, he'd been here, and he'd found how we do all this alliterating.

He said, when we sent him to America, he was a cannon. Now he's come back just a pea shooter. Everything began with pea.

Well, at any rate, verses 24 and 27 are defenders. Verses 28 and 29, deservers. Well, I hope that will help to make this graspable by you.

At least I'll try to explain it. Now, deserters, verses 18 and 19. This is a very crucial time of which the Apostle speaks.

It is the last time. It is literally the final hour. It denotes that period, the beginning of that period that will ultimately conclude all things.

Well, we're still in that period. And I would like to suggest that we're closer to the last of the last times than we were when John said it was the last time. And we shouldn't say, well, all things continue as they were, nothing is changing, because we must recognize that we're something like nearly 1,900 years closer to the conclusion of all things than he was.

But it's been the last time for this entire period. It marks a period of time, long or short, in which apostasy will occur. It marks the beginning of a crisis of enormous significance, that is, the emergence of antichrists.

That's in the plural. This time has been marked by a turning away from Christ on the part of many who profess to follow him. I think it's important for us to realize what Paul said in writing to Timothy that would characterize this period called the last time.

In 1 Timothy 4, verse 1, Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils. In 2 Timothy 3, verse 1, and then part of verse 8, This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come. And in verse 8, Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth.

Men of corrupt mind reprobate concerning the faith. In 2 Timothy 4, and the third verse, For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts or appetites and desires shall they bring heap to themselves teachers. Now there's a comma there.

I used to think it was teachers that had itching ears, but it's not. The people who heap to themselves teachers select the teachers to put in the heap that are going to scratch their ears and make them feel comfortable with what is given. I've heard it said that the preacher of the truth should have two ministries.

One is to comfort the afflicted, and of course that's a ministry with blessing and we all should rejoice in it. But the second is to afflict the comfortable, and I think that we should be just as diligent in the second as we are in the first. And therefore we would not be among that number that consider it their primary purpose in teaching and preaching to make people feel good.

I think our purpose is to understand what God wants to say and not to be among that number that give heed to seducing spirits and turn away from the faith and withstand the truth. Now there have been last times of real significance in the past and even as there will be some last times in the future. Our Lord spoke about it.

He said that we should beware of false prophets. They would come. Many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many and because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold.

In the 24th verse of Matthew 24, for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets shall show great signs and wonders. In the 25th verse, behold, I've told you before, times of great persecution are going to arise. Well, we see that.

We recognize it. We realize it. Peter described it.

Again, we find that in the lifetime of many of you, perhaps not all, but certainly many of us here, more people have died for Christ, for persecution reasons, since 1949 than in all the centuries from the time of Christ until 1949. I don't know that I made that quite clear. Let me repeat it so you're sure you get it.

More people have died martyr's death in behalf of our Lord Jesus Christ since 1949 than in all the centuries from the time of Christ until 1949. Hard to believe? Well, two months before Nixon went to Communist China to open relations with that nation, the Washington Post carried on page 16, column 4 or 5, just a little two-and-a-half-inch summary of a report that had come out of China that during the first 20 years, from 49 to 69, China had found it necessary to, quote, deprive of existence 30 million people, half of them because of stubborn adherence to economic systems inimicable to the purposes of the revolution.

That is, they didn't take kindly to having their money taken away from them.

And the other half was for stubborn adherence to religions imported from the imperialist West. Now, I suppose you could say Buddhism had come from West, and you could say that Islam had come from west of China, and Christianity. Now, let's assume, we don't know the figures, but let's assume that half of those died for their faith in Buddha or in Muhammad, and the other half died for their faith in Christ.

That would mean that about 7.5 million people died martyrs' deaths. I remember hearing in those days about children that reported on their parents, and the authorities would put a cross down on the ground. At one end would be the smiling child that had reported his parents as being believers in Christ, and at the other would be the parents.

And if they would walk on the cross to the child, their life would be spared. But if they didn't, they would die. And most who were confronted with that test elected to die, rather than to do as the government was asking, to walk on the cross.

When the Communists took over in Korea, we are told, and I think quite good authority, that in three months about 800,000 pastors, elders, Christians in North Korea were killed, were assassinated, murdered, sacrificed, martyrs. Call them what you will. Well, that's a great many more than you have listed in the entire book of Fox's book of martyrs.

It covered a couple of centuries. In Vietnam, we are told that 300,000 people died as Christians in about eight months of persecution when the Communists took over North Vietnam. We know that on the Tet Offensive, two weeks over Christmas, there were over 5,000 believers that were killed.

Lined up, a bulldozer dug a trench. They were machine-gunned and pushed into the trench and covered with dirt. So just from those three countries, not counting what happened in Russia, not counting what had happened in other countries, I think it's safe to say that we may be living pretty close to the last times when more people died for Christ in a 20-year period than died in about 18 centuries from the time of Christ.

In Revelation 6, verses 9 to 11, we are told, And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw unto the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony they held. There have been a great many that have died for Christ. There's a supreme test that's given here in this 19th verse.

They went out from us, but they were not of us. Christ declared that a test is required. He that is not with me said, Our Lord is against me.

And in the 5th chapter of 1 John, the Apostle said, He that hath the Son is life. The person who refuses to recognize and enthrone Christ as God, the Son, is antichrist. Everyone who opposes the gospel, as our Lord delivered it, every teacher and writer who lowers the gospel standard to the spirit and taste of the world, is an antichrist.

I didn't say the antichrist. He is an antichrist, no matter where or among whom he may be found. This is a very sad statement, a very sad fact.

There had been in the time of John a defection from the ranks of the followers of Christ. They went out from us. Some of these went out because they loved this present world and did not want under any circumstances to be curtailed, as the scripture indicates that we should live holy lives.

Others went out because they had been seduced by some of the current heresies of the day, by Gnosticism, by antinomianism. There were others who went out as teachers of these pagan philosophies that had crept into the Church, and they went out because they were able to exploit that which they could now use to promote themselves as teachers. They went out disgracing the gospel.

They had made their pernicious and evil opinions a merchandise that they were willing to sell. They had mingled pagan philosophies with biblical terms and so were able to confuse the people. They had turned the truth into a lie and slandered God.

The apostle declared, These are not our fellow believers. We abhor their creed and their conduct, and we never sent them to teach. You've got to recognize they went out from us because they were not of us.

And then it proceeds to say that they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. You know, it's interesting, isn't it, how easy it is for us to confuse external Church membership with vital fellowship with Christ? By no means are they one and the same. They may be, but not necessarily.

When John Wesley began to preach, everyone that he talked to were already members of the Church of England. They all had been baptized. There was only the one fellowship, and every Englishman was inscribed in the local Church records at his baptism.

Isn't any wonder to me that the churches in England closed the doors to Wesley, even though he was in good standing as an Anglican clergyman? When he went to Epworth, where his father had been pastor for many years, the then rector of the church said, We'll not permit this man to stand in the pulpit. And so John Wesley went out. Actually, it really marked kind of the beginning of his open-air ministry.

He went out and stood on the grave of his father. And, of course, they had a good crowd because the rector of the church got messengers to go all through the town saying, Don't go listen to John Wesley, who will be preaching in the cemetery this afternoon. About the only time the people obeyed what the rector said was when he told them what not to do, and they did it.

So the whole town was there, and Wesley stood on his father's grave and preached the truth that God had revealed to him because he'd been a clergyman. He'd finished his training. He'd gone to Georgia as a missionary to the Indians.

And while he was on the way over, he saw the Moravians and the difference between the Anglicans and the Moravians during that terrible storm, convinced him that they had reality that he and his people didn't have. And then he was still with them and saw that fellowship with them while he was in Georgia. And he was terribly abused by the powers of Savannah.

In fact, they drove him out of the church because he refused to serve communion to the daughter of the mayor of Savannah who was living in open immorality with a man in the community. And so Wesley shook the dirt off his feet. In fact, there's a monument down there in Savannah now, a plaque and a stone.

This is the place that John Wesley shook the dust of Savannah off his feet when he left to return to England. When he got back there, he discovered that God had been working in the heart of his brother and some of his friends. And he attended a meeting at Aldersgate Street when a Moravian brother was reading Luther's introduction to the Book of Romans.

And as he read about justification by faith, Wesley said his heart was strangely warm. And he knew for the first time in his life that he had been born of God. And so that day at Epworth when he stood on the grave of his father, he proclaimed to the people of England, that community at least, and it then subsequently went to the nation, that no one had the right to think themselves a child of God because they were a member of a church or they'd been baptized.

It was necessary for them to be born of God. The evidence of the new birth was the witness of the Spirit. So this is an important truth, that external membership does not mean vital fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is possible that even Antichrist can and do exist in the Church. Now, the function of the Word ought to be to divide soul and spirit. It will do that if people will hear it.

But that doesn't necessarily mean that those who discover what the Word has revealed are going to acknowledge it or deal with it. Sometimes the preaching of the Word is a savor of life to life and sometimes to death to death. So what we have here then in these first two verses is this revelation that believers in every age, including ours, must recognize that there will be a falling away.

But in verses 20 and 21 he talks to us about discernment, about being discerners. He says that we have an unction from the Holy One. That's an interesting word.

I wanted to find out what unction was. And the Greek word is *prism*. And it literally means ointment.

It's an ointment that was used when the Chi Hai priest was anointed. And remember when God gave the prescription for the ointment, he said, don't let anyone touch it lest they be judged. Well, this is an ointment.

This is God the Holy Ghost touching those who have been born into the Father's family with an anointing. Here the English word is an unction that enables us to discern between truth and error. It's important for us to realize it.

In Psalm 45 verse 7, Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness. Therefore thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. Those that have been born of God have been anointed.

That's the word. An anointment put on the Holy Spirit himself, not some concoction made of various things that are put together as it was in the time back when an ointment was made for the dedication of the Chi Hai priest. This is God the Holy Ghost.

The same one who witnesses to us that we're born of God is going to be to us the means by which we can discern truth from error, right from wrong. This is from the Holy One. We have an unction from the Holy One.

He that baptized us with the Holy Ghost has given to us with the Holy Ghost this knowledge of truth and error. And it was done when we were born again, but more particularly when we were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Isn't it interesting to realize that in the New Testament the only kind of people that you have are Spirit-baptized people? But isn't it also interesting to realize that all of the teachings given in the New Testament were given to people that were baptized in the Holy Ghost? And all the exhortations in the New Testament were given to people that were baptized in the Holy Ghost.

And all of the warnings in the New Testament were given to believers that were baptized in the Holy Ghost. You know why? Because that's the only kind of believers you have in the New Testament. It's the only kind there were.

After they were baptized in water, they were prayed for, and the Spirit of God came upon them. So all the warnings, all the teachings, all the exhortations were given to Spirit-baptized people. But even so, with all those warnings, all those teachings, all those exhortations, we realize that the believer has this unction whereby we can know truth from error.

And it's extremely important for us to accept the fact that we are so equipped and to pay attention. Have you ever been listening to something being taught on, oh, perhaps in a service, or on television or radio, and you've said, that doesn't sound right to me. I can't put my finger on it.

I don't have a verse, but there's something about that that just doesn't sound right. You know what could very well be happening? God, the Holy Ghost, is causing that unction to exercise in you. And it's therefore extremely important for you to become sensitive to what the Spirit of God may be saying.

Why is it important? Because it's this unction that will preserve us against the antichrists now, for there are many. Oh, we have them in atheism, in pantheism, in deism, anti-supernaturalism. And I must say, with tenderness, because I don't want to be less than tender, since I was among them so many years, misguided and misled, but nevertheless wanting truth, I have to include dispensationalism and dispensationalists, as I say again, among whom I was, but hungry for truth and looking for reality.

Oh, what a burden that lays upon you. Remember years ago, when I was pastor of the First Baptist Church in Little Falls, Minnesota, I was preparing a message from the Gospel of Matthew, and the message just seemed to fall there and open up, and I was thrilled by what I was seeing. But you know, when I finished that message, I said, I better go to Gableyne's Annotated Bible and see if I'm kosher.

And you know, I discovered when I went to it that I wasn't. To show you the tyranny, I didn't just crumple that sermon up and throw it into the wastebasket. I tore it in two.

This lengthwise, not crosswise. See, you could read it if it was, half of it anyway, if it was crosswise. I tore it lengthwise, and then I tore it in little bits, and I put half of them in one wastebasket, another half down the hall in another wastebasket, so nobody would put them together and find out how dangerously close to heresy I'd been.

Talk about living in bondage and living in a straitjacket. Well, I certainly was. All right, the Spirit of God wants us to be equipped so that we will not be misled and captured by the Antichrist.

What is it that the Antichrists deny, verses 22 and 23? They deny that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, that he's the anointed of the Father. And in this respect, you can say that the Jews up until the present are blinded. They deny that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, is both God and man, originally there was an attack on his humanity.

They said he was spirit and not man, that what appeared to be a body was a theophany. Today we live in a time when they see him as man and not God, an attack on his deity. But the Scripture teaches us that he is very God of very God.

God come in the flesh. The Antichrists would teach us that Jesus is not the eternal Son of God. And consequently, they would deny the incarnation.

They would deny the authority of God's word. They would deny its inspiration, and they would deny its truth. Oh, what attacks there are, even today among some who nominally would think of themselves or have us think of them as being evangelical, attacking the authority of the word of God.

This denial involves the fact that they consider there is no personal revelation of God, nor is there any message of love from the eternal throne. No redemption, no Savior. God's word is no longer binding upon people.

We have something today that's approaching this. I'm troubled by it. I pass it on to you.

It seems to me it's dangerous. I had talked to a pastor of a rather large church, and I said, Why aren't you doing more missions? You were talking about this 5,000 to 7,000 people you have in attendance, and I see from your published report that you're giving just a very small amount missions. Well, we are not only controlled by the Bible.

We're also controlled by the Spirit. You see, we have both Logos and Rhema, and we don't consider the Logos binding unless under Rhema the Spirit of God emphasizes it. I said, Well, the people that have been carrying the responsibility of missions for the last 200 years have the word of God.

Well, that's true, but to us it doesn't become binding until the Holy Ghost, by some means. And we've had so many prophetic messages, and none of them have been challenging us to do anything more about missions overseas. I submit to you that, first, I don't believe the Scripture teaches such a distinction that can be hard and fast between Rhema and Logos.

Secondly, that whenever the tradition of the elders or the practice of the people makes the word of God of none effect, it is approaching to this thing that we're talking about here. So we come to the test, the evidence of eternal life, verses 24 to 27, wherein we are told that, Let that therefore abide in you which you have heard from the beginning. What did you hear? What was it that God said? What did God's word proclaim? Let that abide in you.

If there remains in you what from the beginning you heard, you too in the Son and in the Father will continue to remain. That is the translation that Lenski gives that I find very refreshing to my heart. The light, the truth of the word, the commandment, the teachings of the word are the means of establishing for us the basis and the foundation of our fellowship, fellowship with the Father and fellowship with the Son.

And that's the whole purpose of this letter, to make certain that we do understand and that we abide. Now, I've said in the past, and you've heard it, that in this day, as in other days, so it's nothing truly new, a great many people who profess faith in Christ fall away. You've heard the statement that I've made, and it's been made by many, and I'm not being challenged on it.

So I'm assuming that however hard it is for us to grasp or to accept, we do to some degree at least. And that is that out of every 200 persons that profess faith in Jesus Christ in present-day evangelism, at the end of the year, there's only one that's going on effectively for Christ. Now, I know that you can find a particular situation where there's more than one, but you can find other situations where there aren't any.

So this is the average, and it's not my average. It's from some very close to the main evangelistic streams of our nation. What does it mean? It means that multitudes of people are professing faith in Christ on some grounds or other, and then within days or weeks or months they've drifted away.

They've gone back. They're no longer found among the people of God. They're not abiding in Him.

Now in John chapter 15, the apostle writes saying, Abide in Christ. But that abiding has to do with a relationship to Christ. Abide in Christ crucified with Him and buried with Him and quickened with Him and raised with Him and seated with Him.

And then he said, And I will abide in you. That is reciprocal indwelling, said F.B. Meyer, where we live in Christ and our identification and union with Him, and He lives in us to make real His presence and minister through us. That is the abiding of relationship.

But that's not the abiding that the apostle uses here. This is the abiding of continuing, of standing. So when you're sitting across the table from someone who said to you, I am not sure that I am a child of God.

I am not certain that I have passed from death to life. Please help me. And you've gone through, number one, if we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth.

If we say we know Him and keep not His commandments, we're a liar. Any man who doesn't love his brother is still dead in his sins. Love not the world, neither the things of the world.

Any man who loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. You brought them one, two, three, four. Now you come to five.

Let that, therefore, abide in you which you've heard from the beginning. And you're saying, now are you abiding in the profession of faith you made? Are you abiding and continuing in the repentance that you express? Are you continuing to trust in the finished work of Christ? Are you staying? Are you standing on that grounds in which you came into your profession of being a child of God? That's the issue. Because you see, the person that's gone out from us, all of the argument, all of the evidence, all of the support is that they were not of us.

And so when someone is talking to you about this, you'd better bring them right straight to the Word and let the Spirit of God speak to their heart through the Word. I've had people say, well, you know, my husband was saved, but he's been backslidden for many years now. I can't get him to go to church.

I can't get him to do this. He doesn't want to pray, but I was in a church many years ago now, and I told the people, I'm here to help you, and if there's anything I can do, I want you to come to me, and I'll join you in prayer. I'll be of all the help I can in the few days I'm with you.

And the first one that came to me was a lady. And she said, you know, my husband made profession of faith in Christ when Evangelist So-and-So was here. And there's only one verse of Scripture in the Bible that he knows, and she quoted it.

And the Evangelist told him that if anyone ever tried to say he wasn't a Christian, that he should use that verse. So he still continues in his drunkenness. He still continues in his immorality.

I know he's cheating and he's stealing, but he claims he's a Christian and that it's just that he's weak. And she said, I wish you'd pray with me that my husband would be recovered from his backsliding. And I

looked her square in the eye and I said, I'm sorry I can't.

And because I can't, of course I won't. She said, here I am, the first one to come after you invited us to come to you and you'd help us and join us. No, I said, you misunderstand.

I didn't say I won't help you and I won't pray, but I can't pray the way you've asked me to pray. You've asked me to pray that he'll be recovered from his backsliding. I said, I don't know too much about it.

The Word doesn't have too much to say about backsliding. But I know this, you can't backslide till your front slid sometime. I don't think he's ever moved.

I think he's still dead in his sins. And you know, she looked at me and she said, well, I've been suspicious about that. You know, if you see a bird and it's got a bill like a duck and it quacks like a duck and it's got webbed feet and it waddles like a duck and it swims like a duck, I don't think you're being prejudiced if you think that's a duck.

Even though it may have a sign on its chest that says, I am an eagle, I still think you'd be perfectly justified in thinking that perhaps it was a duck. And the Scripture tells us that by their fruits we will know them. And so it tells us also that the ones that come and identify with us and claim to be part of Christ and part of the body of Christ that give ear to seducing spirits and follow heresy and go back into the world and leave that which they profess to have, well, we have reason to believe that they are in very serious problem have not been born of God.

I think the Apostle tells us that those that are born of the Spirit should, must, abide, continue to stay in Christ on the very basis in which they came to a profession of faith in Christ. Fifth evidence of being born of God is abiding, continuing in Christ. Shall we pray? Father of Jesus, look thou upon us now as a people that are concerned about ourselves.

We want to be everything that thou and thy grace and mercy and love would have us be, and in turn we want to help everyone we can. And so we ask thee, Father, that the word may have free course in us and be glorified, and we will abide and continue to stand there. We will resist every effort of a defeated foe to deceive us, that we will permit that anointing, that unction to function in us to enable us discern between truth and error, and that we will ever stand loyal and faithful to the truth as it is revealed to us in Christ and in thy word.

In Jesus' name and for his sake, amen.

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