

First Baptist Church Merritt Island

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So That Your Joy May Be Complete – a study of First John

There's More than One Antichrist

1 John 2:18-29

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This morning, we are continuing our verse-by-verse study of First John. Last week, we saw that the enemies of God, Satan and the powers of darkness, are at work in our world, attempting to thwart the work of Christ in our lives by capturing our hearts and causing us to fall in love with this world.

In our text this morning, John pulls back the curtain a little more and exposes that the work of God's enemy is being advanced in the form of false teachers who attempt draw people away from following Jesus. But this text isn't just warning from John, it's also a word of encouragement. God hasn't left us defenseless. We don't have to live in fear or paranoia. By God's grace and power, we are protected from the attacks of God's enemy. That's the message of God's word for us today. So, let me go ahead and give you our big idea so you can look for it as we read our text.

**BIG IDEA: WE ARE PROTECTED FROM THE ENEMIES OF CHRIST AS WE HAVE FAITH IN GOD'S SON, FIDELITY TO GOD'S WORD, AND ARE FILLED WITH GOD'S SPIRIT.**

**1 John 2:18–29**

***Children, 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. 19 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. 20 But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. 21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 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. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. 24 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. 25 And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life. 26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. 27 But 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. 28 And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.***

So, at first glance, this can be a pretty complicated passage of Scripture. Anytime you start talking the end of time and throwing out the word “antichrist,” things can get interesting.

But, as always, our goal is to focus most of our attention on the main purpose of our text. And in verse 26, John says he is writing these things about the people who are trying to deceive these believers. And in verse 28, John says the objective is for these Christians to remain steadfast in their relationship with Jesus and not be drawn away. That's what our focus will be this morning. We want to see what there is for us to learn about the work of Christ's enemies and we want to see the ways we are protected from being deceived and drawn away from Jesus.

But let's begin by looking at the first thing John says.

## WE ARE LIVING IN THE LAST HOUR

### **1 John 2:18**

***Children, 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.***

John says we are in the last hour. Some people read that and think, "It's been 2,000 years. That's a mighty long hour, John." So, what does he mean?

If you imagine all of human history as one day on God's calendar, the central appointment was for Jesus to go to the cross as a sacrifice for sin, raised from the dead, and ascend back to heaven. In the Gospel of John, you consistently find Jesus referring to His hour. He says things like, "My hour has not yet come." He's talking about the time that was appointed for Him to die and rise again. The last appointment on God's redemptive calendar is the very next thing that is scheduled to occur: the return of Jesus to this world. That's the end of the last hour because Jesus will bring an end to this world as we know it.

### **1 John 2:28**

***And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.***

As sure as Jesus came to this world to endure God's judgment on behalf of all who would trust in Him, Jesus is coming again to bring God's judgment upon all who reject Him. It's the final event before the end of the world as we know it.

And in verse 18, John acknowledges that something will accompany the second coming – the emergence of the antichrist. The word "antichrist" is a term that's only found in the writings of John. And it means exactly what you think it means – one who is opposed to Christ. Over the past few years, we have done several studies on what the bible teaches about the antichrist. You can look up my sermon notes from sermons on Daniel 7, 8, 9, and 11:37-38, and Mark 13:14-27, if you want to do a deeper dive on this.

The antichrist is a world leader who will emerge before the return of Jesus. In Revelation 13, he is referred to as the beast. In 2 Thessalonians 2, he is referred to as the man of lawlessness. He will be evil incarnate and operate under the direct power and authority of Satan. He will unify the nations of the world to oppose the work of Jesus by persecuting Christians and attempting to defeat Jesus at His return.

And John says that even though the antichrist has not yet come, many antichrists are already in the world in the form of false teachers. In chapter 4:1-6, he says these false prophets are operating under the spirit of antichrist. In other words, the same spiritual darkness that will empower the antichrist is already empowering false teachers today.

And in our text, John describes two objectives that are part of the enemy's strategy to oppose the work of Jesus in the world.

## OBJECTIVE #1 – DECEIVE

### **1 John 2:26**

***I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.***

The first objective of God's enemy is to deceive us.

*John 8:44*

*You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

Lies and deception are the native language of God's enemy. He is prolific in his ability to twist and distort the truth. And one of the primary ways he seeks to deceive is by undermining the reliability of God's Word.

*Genesis 3:1–6*

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"*

Satan entered the Garden of Eden in the form of a serpent. The word translated "crafty" means "clever." This isn't saying that all snakes were more clever, it's saying this snake was more clever because it was Satan in disguise. And how does he begin to tempt Eve? He plants a seed of doubt about what God said.

In chapter 2, God spoke directly to Adam about which tree in the garden was off limits. Then, it seems He used Adam to convey that message to Eve. So, Eve heard the Word of God through a messenger. So, the enemy introduced doubt about the message being the actual words of God.

*2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

After Satan planted doubt about what God had said, he blatantly contradicts what God said. He says the word from God was wrong and there was a better way than what God said, denying the very goodness of God. Eve believed the lie and rebelled against God.

And that's the same tactic the enemy is still using. He is trying to deceive people by getting them to doubt the word of God that has been conveyed by God's messengers.

Let me show you how you see that in 1 John.

*1 John 4:5–6*

*They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

When John says "we are from God," he is referring to himself and the other Apostles. The Apostles were a group of men chosen by Jesus, taught by Jesus, and eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. Like the prophets of the Old Testament, they were given authority to proclaim the Word of God. That's what the word "apostle" means, "a messenger sent with authority."

*1 Thessalonians 2:13*

*And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.*

The Apostles were the messengers of God sent in the authority of Christ to deliver God's word. The teaching of the Apostles is preserved for us in the New Testament.

And the first objective of the enemy is to deceive us by causing us to doubt that the Bible is the reliable Word of God. If he can do that, the next step of deception is to blatantly contradict the bible and deny the goodness of God. And that's exactly what's taking place in our world today.

A hundred years ago, Modernism began to take root in most of the historical Christian denominations. Liberal theologians began to undermine the authority of Scripture, and the result has been catastrophic. There is now a complete redefinition of what the Bible teaches about everything from sexual morality to the sinfulness of man to the need for atonement and forgiveness. It has reduced the gospel to nothing more than a social justice program that glorifies man and has turned Christianity into a rebranded version of secular humanism.

I could go on and on about the prosperity gospel and religious pluralism and countless distortions and denials of truth taking place all around us, but the point is that the enemy is actively at work in our world today, deceiving the minds of people and blinding them to the truth about Jesus. And that brings us to the second objective of the enemy.

## OBJECTIVE #2 – DENY

### **1 John 2:22-23**

***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.***

Once the enemy has undermined the authority and reliability of God's Word, he works to deny the identity of God's Son.

And that's the ultimate test of any teaching. If you have any question about a worldview or a religion, ask this question: Does it faithfully align with the claims of the Bible about Jesus?

All the religious movements are fine with you believing in Jesus.

- Muslims believe Jesus was a prophet.
- Buddhists believes Jesus was a great teacher.
- Mormons believe Jesus was a son of God but a separate being from God the Father and the offspring of heavenly parents. They believe He was the brother of Satan.
- Jehovah's witnesses believe Jesus was a son of God – but is the archangel Michael who became a man.
- There are many agnostics and atheists who believe Jesus was a good man.

But the Bible is clear. Jesus isn't just a prophet and a great teacher and one of the sons of God. He is God in the flesh and one with the Father and the Spirit. He is the Lord of Heaven and Earth. He is the way, the truth, and the Life and no one comes to the Father except through Him.

And that transitions us perfectly to three powerful resources John points to in our text that will protect us from the work of our enemy.

## PROTECTION #1 – FAITH IN GOD'S SON

## **23 No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also**

When you confess your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior you are united to the very life of God. You get all of God when you have Jesus through faith. And those who are in Christ are not only saved by His power, they are safe by God's power. Listen to the words of Jesus from the Gospel of John.

*John 10:27-30*

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.*

When you place your faith and trust in Jesus, you are safe in His power. The enemy has to go through the Father and the Son to get to you which is just another way of saying "he ain't getting to you." So, you have no need to fear the work of antichrists when you have faith in Jesus the Christ.

The second protection is...

### PROTECTION #2 – FIDELITY TO GOD'S WORD

***24 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.***

The word "abide" simply means "to remain or to continue in the same place." And John says that when the truth of God's word that they heard from the beginning remains in them, they will continue to experience the life of God. This isn't saying we can lose our salvation. It's saying that one of the marks of true believers is that they continue to believe the truth of God's word.

In Matthew 4:4, Jesus said that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. The word of God is a safeguard for our souls. So, fill your heart and mind with the word of God. The best way to spot a counterfeit is to study the real thing. And the way you learn to detect the lies of the enemy is to become fluent in God's Word. Read the Bible. Study the Bible. Memorize the Bible. Commit to being part of a church that teaches the Bible as the very Word of God.

Our souls are kept safe from the attack of the enemy by the powerful work of God's Word. The third protection from the enemy is...

### PROTECTION #3 – FILLED WITH GOD'S SPIRIT

***27 But 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.***

These verses are referring to the Holy Spirit. In John 13, Jesus told the disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit to live in them and the Holy Spirit would teach them.

Listen, when you place your faith and trust in Jesus, He places the Holy Spirit in you.

- Romans 8:9 says everyone who belongs to Christ has the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.
- Ephesians 1:13 says that believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee that God will finish what He has started in us.

- That's why 1 John 4:4 says we have overcome the enemy because greater is He who is in us than he who is in this world.

And one of the ways the Holy Spirit ministers to us as believers is by teaching us the truth. That doesn't mean we will receive new revelation on par with Scripture. And it doesn't mean there isn't an important role for Bible teachers in our life. What it means is that as we fill our hearts and minds with God's word, the Holy Spirit ensures that we learn what we most need to learn and that He guards us from temptation and deception by opening our eyes to the truth as we encounter truth in God's Word. But that requires us to yield our lives to the Holy Spirit. This is what the Bible refers to as being filled with the Holy Spirit.

*Ephesians 5:18*

*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,*

Getting drunk is a sin. We surrender our minds and even our actions to something else and lose self-control. In drunkenness we are pursuing a release of anxiety or inhibition or stress by letting go through the influence of something else. Whether it's alcohol abuse or illicit drug use, the warning is clear – do not yield any control of yourself to outside substances. Period.

But the point of this isn't that we would maintain control of ourselves. The point is that we would surrender ourselves to the power of God's Spirit in us.

Believer, you have all of the Holy Spirit that you could ever have. That's not the question. The question is, "Does the Holy Spirit have all of you?" Is your whole life yielded to God's Spirit? Or is there a part of your life that you are holding back? Is there a command of Scripture that you know is right, but you just don't want to obey? What would it look like for you this morning to simply say, "God, everything I am and everything I have belongs to you and I want you to be in control?"

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to form the life of Christ in us. He teaches us how God's word takes shape in our unique lives so that we can experience the abundant life of Jesus in every part of our life that we will yield to Him.

And that brings us to the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a representation of the life and death of Jesus. The word of God tells us that the bread represents His body. The body in which He lived a perfect life and died a sacrificial death. The juice represents His blood. The bible says it's by His blood that He has secured our forgiveness and established a new covenant, or a new agreement between us and God. That new agreement is that God will relate to us on the basis of Christ's works and not our own. He will treat us as though we are as good and pleasing to Him as His own Son. So, as we are taking the bread and the juice, it is an outward display that we believe the Bible and are placing our faith in Jesus, the Son of God. That's why the Lord's Supper is only for believers. So, if you've never placed your faith in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, don't take it until you've placed your faith and trust in Jesus to save you from your sin and restore you to God.

And one of the components of the Lord's Supper that is often overlooked is the fact that we take the bread and juice into us. We take the things that represent the life and work of Jesus into us. That's because we believe that as we trust in Jesus, He will live and work in us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And in that way, the Lord's Supper is the perfect application to our message because it's the convergence of fidelity to God's word, faith in God's Son, and a filling of God's Spirit.