

Confidence to Remain in Him

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[0:00] Well, please do grab your Bibles and turn back to 1 John as we continue our way through his letter. I wonder if any of you have ever been bushwalking before.

I'm sure many of you have, I'm sure. And if you have, often there are some bushwalking signs to help keep you on the right track, aren't there? So it could be a warning sign to keep you from danger, like this one in the US, you know, do not feed the bears.

This sign said the same thing, but the bears fed the sign on the sign. Or it could be a sign of reassurance that you are going the right way, you're on the right track.

Or perhaps even how long you've got to go, so you know the end is in sight. But there's even signs that tell you what to do. So this is called ooh-ah point, because you ooh and ah at the scenery.

The point is signs give you confidence to remain on track by warning you of danger and reassuring you you're going the right way.

[1:14] Well, today John gives his readers a warning sign to keep us from danger and a reassurance sign to tell us we're on the right track.

That is, that we might have confidence to remain in Christ. Because it seems the readers are tempted to go off track. As I've said in previous weeks, and as we'll see today particularly, some had left their church.

And are now telling the readers that Jesus is not the Christ. A Christ, remember, is not his surname, it's a title that means anointed king. The king who died for our sins.

And if he's not the Christ who died for our sins, then we don't know God the Father, nor do we have eternal life. And so it's causing some of the readers to doubt.

I remember going bushwalking one time and there was some people ahead of us. And they did, they left the track and went off in a different direction. And I started to wonder, should we follow them? Are we going the right way?

[2:18] Or what should we do? That seems to be the situation with John's readers. What's more, it's tempting to go off track and follow these people. Because it seems like they're having their cake and eating it too.

That is, they deny Jesus is the Christ. Yet still claim to have fellowship and know the Father. And have eternal life. They've gone out into the world to follow their sinful desires.

Yet they still claim to be without sin. As though their actions no longer count as sin. And we've seen those claims in previous weeks. And so it could be tempting for John's readers to follow after them.

Now in case you think this is a bit far-fetched for us today, isn't this sadly what we see happening in a different way? People, they may not deny that Jesus is the Christ, but we do have some so-called Christians denying Jesus' teaching on money or marriage or gender.

And they even teach others to do the same, to follow after them. And they claim it's not sin. And so we have a prosperity gospel, which teaches people that Jesus wants to make us rich in this life.

[3 : 35] Physically rich, not just spiritually rich. And who doesn't want to be rich in this life? And we've got other so-called Christians who vote against the biblical view of marriage and shout down anyone who supports it.

You can't even have a conversation about it. Even with other Christians, it seems, these days. All while still claiming to know God and be without sin.

And so John writes to both warn us and reassure us that we might have confidence to remain on track with Christ.

And he begins with the warning sign, point 1 and verse 15. He writes, Do not love the world or anything in the world.

If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. Here is the warning sign. It's not, do not feed the bears. It's, do not love the world.

[4 : 34] But does that mean we cannot love creation or bushwalks? That we cannot love coffee or good food? And we cannot love our friends and family and neighbours who are in the world?

Of course not. I mean, God so loved the world that he gave his only son, didn't he? And what's more, God has given us lots of things in this world to enjoy with thanksgiving.

Rather, John is saying we're not to love the world and all the things in it with worldly attitudes or sinful desires. Because that's how verse 16 goes on to explain it.

Notice verse 16, John talks about the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life. The pride here being boasting in the possessions of life.

Following these desires such that we ignore God's will for our lives. For example, the world follows the lusts of their flesh and they sleep with whomever they want whenever they can.

[5 : 41] God says, though, sex is really good for marriage. It's just for the married couple because it's like really good glue that helps stick the couple and keep them together.

Or, for example, the world lusts with their eyes. That is, it covets and wants what others have and chases after things. I was coming out of Coles at Tunstall Square last week.

I was opposite Donvale Rehab, about to turn left down Doncaster Road, then went up beside me, pulled a brand new yellow Lamborghini. I looked it up. It's worth \$2.5 million.

I have never been so close to a car so expensive. I could wind out my window and touch it. I meant to take a photo, but I was too busy drooling over it. It's so easy to covet and lust with our eyes, isn't it?

But God's will for us is to find contentment in Him because He knows, and I think we know it too, that all the stuff never brings lasting satisfaction, does it?

[6 : 49] We get tired of it and look for the next thing. And the world takes pride or boasts in their possessions in life, whether they're a house or a Lamborghini. But it's silly because they don't last and they get scratched by trolleys in the Coles car park.

John says, don't love the world with its worldly or sinful desires. But why else are we not to? Well, first, because it's incompatible with who we are.

In verse 15, he says, If anyone loves like this, love for the Father is not in them. And where it says love for the Father, in your Bibles, there's a little footnote.

And if you've got eyes good enough to see the tiny print down the bottom, it can also mean love from the Father. But as I tried to explain last week, it's probably both.

Remember, God first loved us, sent his Son and his Spirit, worked in our hearts, so that we in return could love him. Either way, the person who loves the world like this does not have the love of the Father in them.

[8 : 01] Why? Well, verse 16, For because everything in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, comes not from the Father, but from the world.

The worldly desires, the sinful desires, are of the world. And so if we follow them, if we give in to them, then it shows we are of the world.

But that's not who we are, is it? As the saying goes, Christians are to live in the world, but not be of the world. Because we're of the Father. We are his children.

We have his love in us. And so we are to live by his will, not these worldly attitudes.

Because they're incompatible with who we are. Last weekend, I was helping out with the kids program at the 10.30 weekend, not away. Our children's minister, Michelle, had COVID, so I had to step in.

[9 : 02] And after the teaching spot with the kids in the hall, we started doing games, and we were doing running games, and the kids were chasing me around, and I was trying to run away from them.

But these kids, you know, we're talking toddlers, outran me. After a while, I just ran out of steam and flopped on the floor. And the next day, boy, I was sore.

You see, I try to run like an athlete, but it's incompatible with who I am, which is unfit. We're not to love the world with worldly attitudes because they're not from the Father.

So it's incompatible with who we are, his children who have his love in us. And second, because the world and those attitudes will pass anyway, verse 17.

The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. Our world is passing away, is it not?

[10 : 07] While our advances in technology may slow it down, they cannot cure it. Have you ever noticed how as soon as we deal, society deals with one problem, another one arises?

You know, you deal with one strain of COVID, and then what happens? Another strain comes? Or you think you've got COVID under control, and then monkeypox pops up?

The holes in the ozone layer, we can slow them down, but we can't repair them. Because our world is passing away, which is a reminder that it's not our true home.

In our first reading, we heard how Israel were in Babylon, and they would live and, you know, make their lives, marry, settle down, that sort of thing. But it wasn't their true home.

God had a plan to bring them back to the promised land, remember? And it's the same for us. We're to do good in this world. We're to care for it as well.

[11 : 10] We're to seek the prosperity of our city, and we will prosper too, as it says. But it's not our true home. God's plan for us is to take us to the world to come, the new creation, because this one will pass away.

And so to live by these worldly desires, instead of doing God's will for our lives, is incredibly short-sighted. Especially because verse 17, the one who does the will of God, who trusts in Jesus as the Christ, will live forever.

And a new creation will get all these physical blessings anyway. Oh, sure, we can still do God's will now, and enjoy lots of things in this world. But sometimes it comes down to a choice between satisfying a sinful desire, or doing God's will.

So if you had a choice, which would you rather? Satisfying a lust of your flesh or eyes for something that will pass away, or doing the will of God, which means a life that will last forever.

It's a no-brainer, isn't it? Here is John's warning sign to us, to keep us from danger. Do not love the world with worldly desires.

[12 : 32] They're not from God, so incompatible with us. And the things of this world pass away anyway. John's second sign to help us stay on track with Christ is not a warning one this time.

It's a reassurance that we're on the right track, that we know the truth. So point to verse 18. He writes, Dear children, this is the last hour.

And as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming. Even now many Antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. Now people kind of get caught up with this Antichrist business.

So let me see if I can explain it simply and briefly. In the Bible, the Antichrist singular usually refers to a leader who sets themselves up as a kind of God for people to follow and worship.

And they're always coming, as John says, because there's always a leader like this in history. In 2 Thessalonians, Paul calls him the man of lawlessness.

[13 : 39] In Revelation 13, John calls them the beast. For John's readers, it may well be a Roman emperor who sets themselves up as God to be worshipped because that's what a lot of them did.

And in China today, it may well be someone who has forced churches to put his picture up, almost in an act of worship, who now rules as president for life.

And last November, the party made a historical resolution elevating his status to cult-like status. But verse 22, if you look ahead, actually says, anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ is the Antichrist.

And so does that mean then that every non-Christian is one? After all, most non-Christians, they might say that Jesus was a good man, but I don't know any non-Christian that would say Jesus is their Christ, their King.

Well, the other thing that makes the people hear in 1 John the Antichrist is also verse 26, if you just skip ahead for a moment there. What are they trying to do? They're trying to lead others astray by lies and deception.

[14 : 54] And that's what we see about these Antichrists in the other parts of the Bible. Jesus talks about false Christs who try and deceive Christians. Paul talks about the man of lawlessness who tries to deceive, and it's the same with the beast in Revelation.

They try and all deceive. And so I take it an Antichrist is anyone who denies Jesus is the Christ and tries to deceive and lead others astray, whether by lies or coercion, like persecution.

But the point is, we shouldn't be alarmed when we see them. This is the last hour, and so we should expect them. The last hour refers to the last days, the time between Jesus' resurrection and his return.

And Jesus said, these sorts of people will come during this time. So John reassures them and says, don't be alarmed. It was always going to happen. And don't worry if they leave us, because it shows they were never really part of us, verse 19.

They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But their going showed that none of them belonged to us.

[16 : 07] If a big chunk of people here at HTD suddenly decided that Jesus is not the Christ, and this big chunk left our church, it might cause us to worry about the future of our church.

I mentioned a few weeks ago that the last census showed for the first time that less than 50% of Australians call themselves Christians. I think it was 41 or 43 or something.

And so we might worry about the future of our church. But as a number of you rightly said, and as John says here, we're not to worry.

They were just cultural Christians, not genuine Christians. If they were genuine, they would have stayed. But their going showed that they weren't. We're not to be alarmed by Antichrist nor worry about the church's future.

When we see people leave or give up, they were never part of us to begin with. Nor are we to second-guess ourselves either, because you know the truth.

[17 : 17] Verse 20. He says, but you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth.

No, I write to you because you do know it, and because no lie comes from it. See, John's not writing to tell them the truth about Jesus again. He's writing to reassure them that they already know it.

Do you know, by the way, that two plus two does not equal four? Two plus two does not equal four. Did I cause any of you to doubt for a moment then?

I had Barry down the front go, which school did you go to? Yeah, because you all know the truth, don't you? You know two plus two equals four. You remember playing with these little mass blocks when you were kids, and you had two blocks here and two blocks here, and you put them together, and it's one, two, three, four.

And you had your teacher affirm it so that you knew it inside as well, that you're convicted of it. Well, that's what John is doing here for his readers. He's reminding them that they know the truth.

[18 : 24] They heard it, how it was based on outward evidence, not of mass blocks, but of eyewitnesses like John. And verse 20, they have not a teacher, but an anointing, the Holy Spirit, from God, who confirmed it and gave them inward conviction of it.

And so John says, don't let anyone cause you to second-guess yourselves. You know the truth that two plus two does equal four, that Jesus really is the Christ. You're not wrong.

Those antichrists are. Verse 22. He says, who is the liar? Who's wrong? Well, it's that whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ.

Such a person is the antichrist. Christ denying the Father as well as the Son. For no one who denies the Son has the Father. Though whoever acknowledged the Son has the Father also.

You see, these antichrists are the liars. And do you notice he says there that if they deny the Son, then they don't have the Father either. And if they don't know the Father, then they don't have eternal life.

[19 : 35] Do you remember last week I showed you this prayer from Jesus, where Jesus is praying to the Father and he says, this is eternal life, that they know you, the Father, and me, the Christ, whom you have sent.

And so, if these antichrists don't deny the Son, they don't know the Father, which means they don't have eternal life. And so, John says, stick with the truth.

verse 24, as for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning, the gospel message you heard when you became a Christian, remains in you.

If it does, you also will remain in the Son, and notice, and in the Father. And this is what he promised us, eternal life.

You see the connection there? They will know the Father, which means, from John 17, they have eternal life. From last week, or from this week, verse 25, they have what they've promised, the same thing, eternal life.

[20 : 44] So they are to remain in the Word. Let the Word remain in their hearts. For then, they will remain in the Son, and the Father, and have eternal life.

What's more, John reminds them that this anointing of the Spirit they receive will also remain in them, to help them. So, verse 26, and 27, I am writing these things to you, about those who are trying to lead you astray, but as for you, the anointing, the Spirit you receive from Him, remains in you.

He's not going anywhere. And you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about all things, and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit, just as it has taught you, remain in Christ.

Notice that the Spirit remains in us. He's not going anywhere, and that in itself is reassuring, isn't it? And He will teach us all things, such that we don't need others to teach us.

So does that mean I can quit my job? Does that mean our kids and grandkids don't have to go to school or university? My son, can my son, who's doing VCE this year, can he stop studying if the Spirit will teach him all things?

[22 : 00] What does all things mean here? Well, it's not all things about maths and science, so I'm sorry, my son, you have to keep studying. Rather, it's all things to do with what John has been talking about.

And what has John been talking about? Well, that Jesus is the Christ. They don't need anyone, not John, nor these Antichrists, to teach them about this.

Because verse 24, they've already heard it. At verse 20, the anointing, the Spirit has convinced them so they know it. And here in verse 27, the Spirit will continue to teach them all things about it, reminding them, reassuring them that Jesus is the Christ, our Lord and Savior.

I remember a guy from my old church called Hamish, and he became a Christian while he was on holidays at a ski resort in his room reading the Bible.

No one taught him anything. All he had was a gospel, I can't remember which one, Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, and God's Spirit. And that was enough to convict him of the truth about Jesus.

[23 : 07] It's why we can still read the Bible on our own and get something out of it, isn't it? So at one level, I could quit my job because all we really need is the Word and the Spirit to teach us the truth.

But to help us get more out of the Word and to grow his church more, God has given us teachers. We don't all have the time or the inclination to study Greek or do research and reading to unpack the Word each week.

And so God has given us pastor teachers who can care for us and teach us. But since we have the Word and the Spirit, we can still check what they, what I say. It's why I encourage you to follow along in your Bible.

It's why I go to the effort to make sure it's on the screen for those who are online and don't have access to a Bible. So that you can check what I say and you can know the truth yourselves.

Because at one level, the Word and the Spirit is all we need to know the truth. As Jesus said to his disciples in John's Gospel, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name will teach you all things.

[24 : 16] Not maths and science, but remind you of everything I have said to you, says Jesus. Which means, by the way, the Spirit doesn't give us a different word from God.

He reminds us of the same word from God or from Jesus. As some Christians, I've heard someone say to me before that they decided to ignore this part of the Bible because the Spirit gave them a different word and that was better.

So they will follow that. But when we come to chapter 4, we'll realize that that wasn't the Holy Spirit, that was a different Spirit telling them. Because the Holy Spirit never contradicts God's Word.

They go together. which is why in Ephesians chapter 6, the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. Yeah. And why in our passage the Spirit teaches us to do the same thing as the Word of John's letter.

Do you see the last three words of verse 27? It's taught us to remain in Him, in Christ, to stay on track.

[25 : 24] We will at times all feel the pressure to go off the track of Christ, whether it's because the world's ways seem appealing to us or because other so-called Christians go off around us.

In fact, I have to have a difficult conversation this week with someone who appears to have gone off track when it comes to teaching my kids at school. But we can have confidence to remain in Christ.

For as appealing as the world may be, their ways are not from God and will pass away. And as convincing as other so-called Christians may sound, we know the truth and we have the Word and the Spirit to help us.

And so we have every reason to confidently stay on track and remain in Him. Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do thank you for these signs that help us to stay on track with Christ.

Help us, we pray, to heed them, to not love the world and to remember that we do know the truth, that we might not be led astray but remain in Christ.

[26 : 45] We ask it in His name. Amen. Amen. Amen.