

"The Sufficient Anointing"

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[0:00] Go ahead and open your Bibles, please, to 1 John 2. 1 John 2 is where we're at today. Do you know the feeling that when you set out to accomplish something and then you find yourself in way over your head?

This frequently happens to me, especially when I'm doing some kind of house project. But fortunately, I have a very helpful neighbor.

My neighbor, Bill, is a retired engineer, and not only does he have every tool known to man in his garage, and not only does he know the best way to use those tools, but he also has lots of spare time to help his very helpless neighbor whenever I am in need.

Usually I'm outside working on a project. I find myself, I've bitten off more than I can chew, and without fail, Bill shows up with the right tool and the right technique, and he helps me do the job properly, and he stays to help me out.

He likes to come and just help me. So I'm very thankful for my very helpful neighbor. I think when the State Farm Insurance people made their little lingo of like a good neighbor, they were thinking of my neighbor, Bill.

[1:21] If you've been a Christian for any period of time, I'm guessing you have found yourself feeling in over your head when it comes to following Jesus.

It is difficult to shake certain sins. It is difficult to love other people. Sometimes it seems impossible, since sometimes you find yourself surrounded by competing voices, both outside you and inside you, that play on your hopes and your confidence.

And when hardship and troubles come, that gets even more shaken. Your determination to follow Jesus gets deflated or muddled, and you find yourself in over your head.

You find yourself in need of help. Maybe you find yourself there right now. That's certainly where the Christians in the Roman province of Asia found themselves at the end of the first century.

And that's why the Apostle John sat down to write this letter of 1 John. These Christians were struggling. They found themselves in over their heads, knowing just who Jesus was, who they were as Christians, and how they were to go forward.

[2:40] Our text for this morning is in 1 John 2, verses 26 and 27, just two verses this morning, but it's a close follow-up to what Caleb preached several weeks ago before Advent.

And I'd like to go back and read, starting with verse 18 of 1 John 2. 1 John 2, starting with verse 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. 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 are all not of us. But you have been anointed by the Holy One. Keep that word anointed in the back of your mind. And you all have knowledge.

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. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?

[3:43] 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.

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.

And this is the promise that he made to us, eternal life. I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.

But the anointing that you receive 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.

Several weeks ago, Caleb preached on these verses and helped us see that these ancient Christians were being assaulted, as the Apostle put it, by antichrists. Plural. These antichrists, as John called them, were trying to derail the faith of those believers in these churches in Asia that John was writing to by shifting their focus away from the clear, true, good news of Jesus.

[5:03] And although they were feeling in over their head, the Apostle John knew they had a sufficient helper to help them stand firm and hold fast to Jesus.

And that helper's name, although he goes by the name of anointing in this passage, is the Holy Spirit. We'll unpack why he's called that in a little later, but that's the big idea of this passage here in verses 26 and 27.

God was and is telling his people to hold fast to Jesus with the Spirit's sufficient help. That's our big idea, hold fast to Jesus with the Spirit's sufficient help.

Help. Let me unpack that big idea with three C's we find in this passage. Three C's. The first is this, the Apostle John's command to hold fast to Jesus.

The command is to hold fast to Jesus. Let me reread verses 26 and 27. And as I do, I want you to feel a building momentum to the last three words.

[6:08] Listen. I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you receive 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. Abide in him.

That's the command. That's the thrust of this passage. We could also say it this way. Hold fast. I believe Caleb summarized it a few weeks ago as to stick with Jesus.

We must remain steadfastly connected to Jesus. We must hold fast to him, stick with him, follow him, abide with him.

And that, this is what 1 John is all about. That command. The Apostle wants these struggling Christians to be firmly connected to Jesus for the rest of their days.

[7:04] And he wants to help them see that they're doing it and he wants them to keep on doing it. He wants them to have and maintain a dynamic, experiential, growing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And John talks about this dynamic relationship all through the letter. He uses different language to describe it sometimes. Sometimes he uses the language of abiding here. In chapter 1, he talks about having fellowship with God or being born of God as Pastor Mike's going to preach next week. The famous image for this relationship Jesus uses in John 15. He says, I am the vine and you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.

For apart from me, you can do nothing. So this relationship is this organic connection. It's something that is already in place for every Christian and yet it also at the same time must be maintained.

It's this fruitful, life-giving, mutual connection between the vine of Jesus and the branches of Christians in which we depend on Jesus in every aspect of our life.

[8:13] And here in this letter, John describes different ways that we can maintain and nurture this abiding relationship. First, we must believe the truth of who he is and what he has done to save you.

There's this truth dimension to it. And second is we must obey his commands. And the third is we must love our fellow Christians. And John uses these three dimensions, the truth, the obedience, and the love to kind of, he constantly cycles back and forth with these throughout the whole letter. And if any one of these isn't functioning, then you're not abiding in Christ. Something's off. The relationship isn't right. For example, if you believe all the right things about Jesus, but, and maybe you're really moral, you keep his commands, but you're not very loving, then something's off.

The abiding connection is not there. Or you might be a very nice, loving, accepting, tolerant person, but if your Jesus is not the Jesus of the Bible and you're living your life without regard with what God tells you to do, then you're not really abiding in Jesus either.

All three have to be in place. And in this particular part of the letter, here in John 2, John's very concerned about the truth dimension of abiding in Jesus. Look at verse 24.

[9:30] Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. That's the teaching of the truth of the gospel. Let what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father.

And what was it that these Christians heard in the beginning? It was the truth of the gospel, that Jesus is the Christ, verse 22, the Messiah. It's what the Antichrists were denying. And so, according to verse 24, the Christians who are convinced of this truth in their hearts and they hold fast to it, they have an abiding relationship with God himself.

We must have this truth of the gospel abiding and functioning in us from his word in order for us to abide in Christ. It's essential.

And that's what John's commanding in verse 27 at the very end. Abide in him through the resting and the treasuring of the truth of the gospel.

And do you see what's at stake? Look at verse 25. This is the promise he made to us, eternal life. When we have the truth of the gospel abiding in us, we are enjoying fellowship with the living God.

[10:41] And do you know what that is? That's eternal life. What Jesus says in John 17, 3, backs this up. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

So this abiding relationship is crucial. We must have it as Christians if we're going to have eternal life. And one of the ways we have it is through a treasuring and believing and trusting in the truth of the gospel.

So, dear brother and sister, is this important to you? Is this a priority for you? Do you come to church? Do you go to life group with the thought, I need God's word abiding in me so that I can abide in Jesus?

and have eternal life. Is this on your mind as you think about your own personal habits of Bible reading and meditating on God's word? I need God's word abiding in me so I can abide in Jesus and have eternal life.

This is vital because there is something lurking all around us that would steer us away from this essential command to abide in Jesus.

[11:48] And that brings us to our second C, John's concern. John's concern. The concern is the danger of deception. The danger of deception.

Take a look at verse 26. I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. The reason the apostle is writing to these Christians is because they are still holding fast to Jesus but they are being assaulted by deceivers.

As Caleb pointed out a few weeks ago these deceivers were called the antichrist because they were denying the truth of the gospel and trying to influence these faithful Christians to do the same. And the particular deception that was being kind of put forward in these churches was a heresy called Gnosticism or an early form of that heresy. Gnosticism was kind of a loosey goosey spiritualism that said that all material things are bad and all spiritual things are good and the way that you become good is by kind of getting this special spiritual knowledge.

It kind of looked like Christianity on the outside but once you lifted the hood it flatly denied the teaching of the Bible especially the central truth of who Jesus is as the God-man or Redeemer.

[13:06] Thankfully these faithful people that John's writing to seem to not have been influenced by these deceivers because by the time John wrote these deceivers had been kicked out of the church but at the same time they were obviously in need of encouragement and exhortation to hold fast.

Church we should share John's concern. We should not think that we are so firm in our stance that we become proud and we fall.

In America we face grave deceptions. There are untruths abounding all around us and some of them masquerade in Christian dress.

Ultimately deceptive doctrines kind of boil down to two basic kinds of errors. The first are the kinds that take away from the truth of the gospel. That's kind of what Gnosticism was doing.

It denies certain aspects of the good news message. They either deny the problem that the good news message addresses or the solution to that problem. They either deny that sin is a real issue and our guilt before God is a real issue and that Jesus came as a man and the God-man to die in the place of sinners to solve that problem.

[14:22] And so that's one of the kinds of errors that we face those that take away the truth of the gospel. For example Oprah Disney other kinds of pop American self-help-ness is basically says our biggest problem is not our guilt before a holy God but our lack of individual fulfillment.

And the biggest the solution to that problem is ourselves. If we look deep enough if we look inside hard enough we get to know our true selves then we can truly find what makes us fulfilled and happy.

Or here's one that's maybe a little more closer to home. This is what I call kind of a good old boy American theology. It's a doctrine that is kind of a pop doctrine that kind of surrounds us. We kind of hear about it all the time. This doctrine says yeah God exists. He's a nice guy. He's good. He takes care of my problems whenever I need him. He wants me to be happy and since I'm basically not a jerk I'll go to heaven when I die.

It's got some Christian flavor to it but it's missing the core of the gospel. It's not what the Bible teaches. God did not become a man and die on the cross for basically good people who only need him every once in a while.

[15:41] We must be on our guard against deceptive doctrines that take away elements of the truth of the gospel. The second kind of error is that which not takes away but adds to the gospel.

The truth of God's word says that Jesus alone saves us from our greatest problem but Christians in particular can be tempted to embrace a kind of self-righteous legalism that kind of smuggles in certain things that says it's our trust in Jesus plus these things that makes us truly good Christians. So for example those who say well it's a certain kind of lifestyle that you need to have or a certain set of doctrines you must believe that are outside the necessary gospel of Christ or a certain political affiliation.

This is what got the Galatians in trouble when we had our series in Galatians a while ago. That's why Paul was so adamant about the need to keep the good news of the gospel squarely in view. There's been something I've been hearing among Christians from both sides lately that kind of smacks of this add to the gospel flavor. I've heard Christians on both the right and the left say that whoever they voted for, whoever you voted for in the presidential election is a sign of whether you are a true or a false Christian.

[17:06] That the only true Christians voted for Trump or only true Christians voted for Biden. I've heard it on both sides. But if we're putting it that way, that's an important decision of who to vote for, but if we're putting it that way, then we're adding to the gospel.

We're saying it's Jesus plus a vote for someone. But that's, we're deceiving ourselves and we're deceiving others. That's not what the gospel says. What determines whether we truly have a relationship with the living God is whether we trust in the good news of Jesus.

Whether we trust in his death and resurrection to rescue us from our greatest problem of guilt before a holy God. And we must guard against taking away or adding to this good news so that we can continue abiding in a life-giving relationship with Jesus.

Jesus, do you believe, do you personally trust in the sufficient message of the gospel to save?

Do you recognize that you have real guilt before a real God that only the real God-man Jesus Christ can take away? That is the truth of the gospel.

[18:18] That is the truth we must hold to and treasure more than anything else because we ought to be concerned about deceptive doctrines because they are nearer than we think and we are not as clever as we think and because the stakes are really high.

But although we should be concerned we also must have great confidence and that is our third C. We must have great confidence.

John had great confidence in something for these Christians because like my neighbor Bill we have a helper very close at hand as we seek to hold fast to the truth that is in Jesus.

And that confidence is the sufficient anointing of the Holy Spirit. The sufficient anointing of the Holy Spirit. Take a look at verse 27.

But the anointing that you receive 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.

[19:30] So it's obvious that although John is writing out of concern that there are wolves among his flock he's confident that these Christians have what it takes to hold fast to Jesus.

And why is he so confident? It's because of this anointing. It's mentioned twice in this verse it's also mentioned back in verse 20. Now there's a little bit of debate about what this anointing is.

Scholars debate about whether it's one thing or another but the most probable explanation is that it is a reference to the Holy Spirit. I think that will become clearer as I keep going. But why wouldn't John just say the Holy Spirit?

Why does he say anointing? Well it's hard to be sure but what is associated most with someone who is anointed by God both in the Old and the New Testament is that they are specially chosen and sufficiently equipped to accomplish God's purpose.

They're specially chosen and sufficiently equipped to accomplish God's purpose. The kings and priests in the Old Testament who were anointed with oil to signify that they were set apart and chosen by God had a purpose that God was designated them for.

[20:40] And more than once when those individuals were anointed with oil the Spirit of God came upon them and equipped them sufficiently with God's own strength and ability to accomplish that purpose.

So when David was anointed by Samuel the Spirit of God came upon him as a seal of God's special choosing of David and the sufficient equipping with the ability to accomplish the purpose.

Interestingly enough when Jesus came around he was never taken aside by John the Baptist or a prophet and anointed with oil. And yet he's called the anointed one the Messiah.

And yet the gospels take special pains to show how the Spirit of God visibly came upon Jesus in full measure at his baptism. And that's how his anointing is explained in Acts 10 38.

He's described as being anointed by God with the Holy Spirit. Specially chosen sufficiently equipped for his role as our Messiah. And guess what? The moment that you put your faith in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you became united with Christ you share in his anointing.

[21:49] You are given the gift of the Holy Spirit who was also on your Savior. And this therefore shows that you are specially chosen and sufficiently equipped to do what God asked you to do.

Which is what? To abide in Christ. To hold fast to him. Even when you're surrounded by deceitful doctrines around us. Even with deceitful heart within us.

We are sufficiently equipped and particularly chosen to abide in Jesus. And we have a helper to help us do that. The Holy Spirit. Look at how this anointing is described in verse 27.

There are four things I want to point out. First, this anointing is received. The anointing that you received from him. Jesus said in John 14, 15, 16, I am sending the Spirit to you.

The Father is going to send the Spirit to you in my name. And so this anointing, this helper, is a gift to be received. We just unpacked Christmas gifts from around the tree.

[22:54] We don't earn them. We haven't kind of done certain things to deserve them. They're just given. And that's the Holy Spirit. He is a gift to be received with much gratitude because of what a gift he is to us in Christ.

Secondly, notice that John says this anointing abides in you. This very sufficient helper is continuously available, always present, and always active.

A little later in his letter, John's going to kind of unpack more about this Spirit abiding in us. Look at 1 John 3, 24. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God and God in him.

And by this we know that he abides in us by the Spirit whom he has given us. Do you hear what John is saying here? We're not the only ones who abide.

If we abide in God, if we hold fast to him in faith, he's doing the same with us. He's abiding in us. The abiding is mutual. A relationship with God is not this one-way street where he's demanding that we come 100% to him.

[24:08] He also comes 100% to us. He abides with us as we abide in him. But how does that happen? God the Father is in heaven.

Jesus his Son is at his right side. How can the eternal transcendent God who cannot be seen with our eyes abide with us and even in us?

The answer is in the Spirit. The anointing. By this we know that he abides in us by the Spirit whom he has given us. The Holy Spirit is God's personal agent of God's presence and power in the life of a believer.

We are able to experience the presence of God and his power to live the Christian life only through the Spirit whom he sent to be with us and to abide with us forever.

Friends, the Holy Spirit has to be one of the most overlooked treasures you possess. God's very presence is with you. In you.

[25:10] Always accessible. Always working. Always attending to your greatest need. We should be overwhelmed with gratitude for this incredible gift.

Third, is that this anointing teaches. This anointing teaches. Look at verse 27 again. Listen for the teach word. 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.

Now by saying this John isn't denying the need for teachers in the local church. If he believed that he wouldn't be writing to this church instructing them and admonishing them. Rather, John's emphasizing that one of the Spirit's main responsibilities is to teach us and his teaching is effective and it is sufficient for us.

And the way he teaches us is through the faithful instruction of God's word in the local church. The Spirit's teaching is sufficient. He teaches us about, notice he says, everything.

Now it doesn't mean about physics or chemistry. He's talking about everything necessary for us to abide in Christ. Given the threat of deceptive doctrines around us, that is a huge comfort.

[26:26] That is a great source of confidence. The Spirit is our ever-present guide leading us into all that we need to know and believe about Jesus in order to hold fast to him for eternal life.

But how does he do that? How does the Spirit teach us? Listen to what Jesus says in John 14, 26. But 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 have said to you.

Bring to our remembrance what Jesus has already said to us. When we think of the Holy Spirit as our teacher, we don't need to think about like some professor doing an info dump on ignorant students.

Rather, we should think of our Holy Spirit teacher as a guide on a long hiking trip. He's not only knowledgeable of the trail, but he is with us on the journey right in step with us, helping us know what we need to know and how we need to know it at the right time, at the right moment, because we often forget what we already know.

Or we don't realize how important and how applicable it really is. How real, how true and certain it is. He applies the truth of Jesus to our hearts at just the right time and in just the right way to make Jesus real and beautiful and delightful to us.

[27:50] There are different kinds of knowing. There's lots of things that we know that's stored in our brains. Lots of bits of data and knowledge, but there's a difference. I think everyone probably recognizes the difference between kind of a, okay, nod my head and a, oh, yeah.

I think I see that for the first time even though I've known it for a long time. And that's the Spirit's job. It's to bring us from a, uh-huh, to a, oh. That's His job. So when we are disoriented on the path, He teaches us by fixing our gaze on our true identity as God's children in Christ.

When we are feeling the sting of condemnation, He teaches us by fixing our eyes on Jesus' finished work on the cross and making it real and beautiful to us.

And we have, when we wonder on our way from the, from the path, He teaches us by convincing us that God's way is indeed better and helps us forsake our sin.

When we're apathetic, when our faith feels like zero percent, He teaches us by blowing back into flame our faith and our desire to abide in Christ again.

[29:04] So the Holy Spirit teaches us. But lastly, not only does He teach us, but what He teaches is true. Did you notice that? and His anointing teaches you about everything and is true and is no lie.

The Spirit's ministry is all about the truth. He is called the Spirit of truth. We can be utterly confident in our guide because He communicates only what He hears from the Father and from the Son and declares it effectively to our hearts and our minds.

When I was in college, I took a philosophy course. I was about 20 years old and I had to read some writings of some philosophers that were definitely denied vehemently the truth of the gospel.

And I remember wrestling with these for a long time in my room and trying to figure out what I believed about all this and I decided to take a walk. And so I was walking through the campus. It was kind of a cold night and I remember looking up at the stars and as I was gazing at the stars, kind of praying and my mind was fuzzy, it's like this certainty just dropped into my mind of what I know about Christ is true.

[30:19] It has to be true. And it wasn't necessarily words or logical arguments, it was just this certainty. It was this conviction and settledness about what I knew to be true.

Looking back on that, I know it was the Holy Spirit because I've had that kind of clarity happen so many different times in different ways before where Jesus is all of a sudden clear and real to me because of the Spirit's work in my heart.

It is the Spirit's marvelous ministry to make Christ real, certain to us. It causes us to not just believe things intellectually but a kind of joyful resolve to trust and obey Him because we realize how real and true He is.

So this wonderful helper is perhaps even better than a good neighbor. He's a source of much confidence for us as we seek to hold fast with Jesus.

As the Spirit has already taught you, church, continue abiding in Jesus. Find ways to partner with the Spirit of God to strengthen that abiding relationship.

[31:30] That happens through our spiritual disciplines, through our reading of God's Word, through our praying. If we are not intentionally partnering with the Spirit by abiding in God's Word, then He doesn't have much to work with.

So, whatever you need to do in 2021, whatever resolution, whatever decision, whatever habit you need to form, take steps to partner with the Holy Spirit to abide in God's Word so that you may abide in Christ and the Spirit can be at work in you, strengthening that.

But that also happens not just in our spiritual disciplines. It happens through a daily, moment by moment, acknowledgement and understanding, recognizing of God's presence, recognizing, Brother Lawrence called it the practicing the presence of God, recognizing that in every step throughout the day, I am with God and He is with me because the Spirit's presence is at work and He is sufficient.

He is there to help, to reorient my gaze so when I'm sitting in my office and I'm working or if I'm home or I'm driving, there are ways for me to abide in Christ even in those small moments throughout the day, recognizing that He is there.

Brothers and sisters, do you find yourself in need of help? Do you find yourself shaky or weary? Are you letting go of Jesus?

[32:56] Do you even care about abiding in Him? Remember, this passage is calling us to remember the call and the command to abide in Christ, to hold fast to Him because it is eternal life.

There is no life outside of Jesus. Hear that command to hold fast. And the enemy of your soul wants nothing less for you to be deceived into thinking that there is life outside of Jesus.

that there is a more desirable source of rest or peace than Jesus Christ. So hear the concern for your soul in this passage. But also, most of all, remember that your sufficient helper, the Holy Spirit, is with you.

Remember the confidence that you have in Him as your guide whose consistent purpose is to make Christ tangibly real and delightful to your soul. He is better than a good neighbor.

He dwells in you, with you, and is constantly, tirelessly working for your good. So, church, let's abide in Him. Let's hold fast to Him.

[34:05] We are often in over our heads, but we have a sufficient helper who is with us. Let's hold fast to Him together with the Spirit's help. Let's pray. Amen. Lord, apart from your Holy Spirit's work, we are in over our heads.

We are sunk. We are so thankful for your Spirit who makes Jesus real and certain and beautiful and delightful to us.

God, we ask for more and more and more of that in 2021. God, strengthen our faith by your Spirit.

Lord, would you uphold our resolve to trust and to obey you more and more.

Lord, cause us to delight in Jesus and to abide in Him that we might have eternal life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen.