

Confidence to Remain in Him

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[0 : 00] Well, I wonder if you've ever been bushwalking before. Have we got any bushwalkers here? One, two, no one's going to put their hand up. I'm pretty sure most people have done at least one, even willingly or unwillingly.

And when you do go bushwalking, there's often signs that help you stay on the right track, aren't there? So it could be a warning sign that keeps you from danger, like in America, this one. Caution, bears, do not feed the bears. This sign said the same thing, but the bear got to it first. But it's not just warning signs.

They could be reassurance signs that you're on the right track. So this is the trail, this way. It could even be signs that tell you how many k's you've got to go, so you can pace yourself and keep going on the right track.

And there's even signs that tell you what to do, like this one called ooh, ah, point. Because you're supposed to ooh and ah. The point is signs give you confidence to remain on the right track.

[1 : 04] By warning you of danger and reassuring you, you're going the right way. And in our passage today, that's what John is giving us and his readers.

A warning sign and a reassurance sign, as it were, to give them confidence to remain on the right track, namely in Christ. Because it seems, as I've said before, that they're tempted to go off track. As I mentioned over the previous week, some people had left their church, and we're going to see it particularly in our passage today. And now they're telling his readers that Jesus is not the right track.

They're denying that Jesus is the Christ, which again, remember, it's not his surname, it's a title. The anointed king who died for us. And if Jesus is not the Christ, then he's not the way to know the Father, nor the way to eternal life.

And so it's casting some doubt in the minds of the readers. I remember going bushwalking one time, and the people in front of us actually went off the track. And it did cause me to doubt.

[2 : 11] Should we follow you? Do we go the right way? What do I do? That seems to be the situation with John's readers. What's more, it's tempting for his readers to follow those who have left, because it seems like those who have left are having their cake and eating it too.

And what I mean is they deny that Jesus is the Christ. But as we've seen, they still claim to have fellowship and know God, the Father, with eternal life.

They've gone out into the world to follow sinful desires and their own desires. Yet as we've seen, they still claim to be without sin. As though anything they do doesn't count as sin.

And so it could be tempting to follow them. And in case you think it's a bit far-fetched for us today, isn't this what we still see happening in a bit of a different way? People deny Jesus' teaching, whether on money, marriage or gender, and they follow the world's teaching.

And so we have the prosperity gospel, which teaches churches that Jesus wants us to be rich in this life. Of course, if they give money to the church.

[3 : 22] And who doesn't want to be rich in this life? When Jesus clearly promised, no, no, that's the life to come. We have every physical blessing in this life, not every physical one. Every spiritual blessing, rather, in this life, not every physical one.

And we also have people who go against the biblical view of marriage and shout down anyone who upholds it. But you can't even seem to talk about it these days without being called names.

And this they teach while still claiming to know God and to be without sin. And so it's still relevant for us today. John writes to both warn and reassure us that we might have confidence we're on the right track and remain in it in Christ.

And he begins with the warning sign. And so point one in your outline, verse 15 in your Bible, he says, Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them.

So here's the warning sign. It's not do not feed the bears. It's do not love the world or the things in it. But does that mean then we cannot love creation and bushwalks, you know, good coffee and good food, that we cannot love our friends, family and neighbors who are in the world?

[4 : 35] Well, of course not. 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 to enjoy in this world with thanksgiving.

Rather, John is saying that we're not to love the world and the things in it with worldly desires, sinful desires. That's how he goes on to put it in verse 16, with the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life.

Pride is boasting and the word life here means our possessions in life, you know, boasting in our stuff. And he's saying we're not to do those things such that we ignore God's will for our lives and chase after these desires instead.

In other words, we're not to love the world with these worldly attitudes. For example, the world follows the lusts of the flesh and sleeps with whomever they want whenever they can.

But God says, no, no, sex is really great in marriage. It's for the couple. It's like the good glue that helps keep them together. Or the world lusts with their eyes, you know, that is it covets things, chases after the next thing.

[5 : 50] In fact, I was coming out of Coles at Tunstall Square this week and I was just opposite Donvale Rehab. I was about to turn left onto Doncaster Road when this brand new yellow Lamborghini pulls up next to me.

I looked it up. It's worth \$2.5 million. For real. I'd never been so close to a car so expensive. I could wind down my window and touch it.

In fact, I meant to take a photo, but I was too busy drooling over it. It's so easy to lust with our eyes to cover it, isn't it? But God's will for us is to find contentment in Him because He knows stuff doesn't bring lasting satisfaction.

After a while, you kind of get used to it and want the next thing, don't you? And the world takes pride or boasts in their possessions in life, whether their house or their Lamborghini, but it's silly because things don't last and they just get scratched by trolleys at Coles.

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

[7 : 01] He says in verse 15, if anyone loves this world, love for the Father is not in them. But where it says love for the Father, there's a footnote in your Bibles.

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

You remember, God first loved us, loved us, sent His Son, His Spirit to work in our hearts so that we then love Him in return. Either way, a person who loves the world like this, John says the love of the Father is not in them.

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.

If we live by these worldly attitudes, it shows that we're actually of the world because these attitudes are not from God. As the old saying goes, Christians are to live in the world, but not of the world, because it's not who we are.

[8 : 17] We are God's children. We are of Him. His love is in us. And so to live with those worldly attitudes is incompatible with who we are.

Last weekend, I was helping with the kids program at our 10.30 weekend, not away, because Paul Michelle had COVID. And at one stage, after we did the teaching time, we were doing some running around games and the kids were chasing me around the hall and I was trying to run away from them.

These are toddlers, right? And they outran me. At one point, I just collapsed on the floor, exhausted, and the next day, boy, I was sore.

You see, I tried to run like I was 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.

And so it's incompatible with who we are as His children, who have His love. And second, because the world and those attitudes will pass away.

[9 : 23] Verse 17. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. Our world is passing away, isn't it?

And while our advances in technology may slow it down, they cannot completely cure it. Because as soon as we fix one problem, another one seems to come up.

Have you noticed that? You know, we deal with one strain of COVID and then what happens? Another strain comes up. Or we think we have COVID under control and then monkey pox pops up. Our technology can slow, but not cure, because this world is passing away. And it's a reminder that it's not our true home. In our first reading, we heard how Israel was to settle down and live life in Babylon, to, you know, care for it, help it prosper, because then they would prosper.

But it wasn't their true home. Because the reading went on to say that God had a plan for them to bring them out of Babylon to this place, their promised land.

[10 : 32] And it's the same for us. We're to do good in this world. We're to care for it, help it prosper and do the right thing. 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 God's will for our lives, it's incredibly short-sighted. Because these things as well will pass away.

And in fact, it's short-sighted because the one who does the will of God, verse 17, will live forever.

And will enjoy the world to come with all these physical blessings anyway.

Oh sure, we can still do God's will and enjoy lots of things that we want in this world. Don't get me wrong. Guys, I said God's given us lots of great things to enjoy. But sometimes it comes down to a choice between satisfying a sinful desire or doing God's will.

And so if you had a choice, which would you rather? Satisfy the lust of your flesh or eyes for something that will pass away or do God's will and enjoy a life that will last forever.

[11 : 47] It's kind of a no-brainer, isn't it? Here's John's warning sign to us to keep us from danger and to keep us on track with Christ.

Don't love the world with these desires. But John's second sign is to help us stay on track with Christ as well. And this time, it's not a warning, it's a reassurance that we do know the truth despite what others may be saying.

So point to verse 18. He says, Dear children, this is the last hour and as you've 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 in this Antichrist business.

So let me take a few minutes to kind of try and explain as simply as I can.

In the Bible, the Antichrist singular seems to refer to any leader who sets themselves up as God to be followed and worshipped by people in the world.

[12 : 53] And it says in 1 John here that they are coming because there's always a leader like this in history who is coming. It happens at different times throughout history.

In 2 Thessalonians, Paul calls them the man of lawlessness. In Revelation 13, John calls them the beast. For John's readers, it may well be a Roman emperor because a lot of them set themselves up as God to be worshipped by the people.

And for our dear brothers and sisters in China, it could well be the president who back in 2018 forced churches to put up pictures of himself beside the cross in a kind of worship style.

and who even just last November passed a resolution elevating his status. So we need to keep praying for our brothers and sisters in China. But verse 22, if you look ahead, it says though, verse 22 actually says anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ is an antichrist.

So does that mean every non-Christian is one? Because while they may say that Jesus was a good man, I doubt any non-Christian would say that Jesus is their Christ, their king.

[14 : 11] So are they all antichrists? Well, the other thing that makes these people in 1 John antichrist is also verse 26. Let me just skip ahead to there for a moment.

Because what are they trying to do? They're trying to lead others astray, whether by lies or deception. And that's what we see elsewhere in the Bible when it talks about these kinds of people. Jesus talks about false Christs who will try and deceive Christians. The man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians tries to deceive others. And even the beast in Revelation deceives.

And so I take it an antichrist is anyone who denies Jesus is the Christ and tries to deceive others, whether by lies or coercion, like persecution.

But the point here that I think John is making is that we shouldn't be alarmed when we see them. Because this is the last hour. Or as the Bible says elsewhere, the last days, the time between Jesus' resurrection and his return.

[15:12] The time when Jesus himself said these sorts of people will come. So don't be alarmed when you see them. It's just part of the time we live in. And he says, 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. Imagine a big chunk of HTD decided to deny that Jesus was the Christ and then left our church. It could cause us to worry about our future here, couldn't it?

In fact, I said a few weeks ago that our last census shows that for the first time, less than 50% of Australians call themselves Christians. It was 41 or 43, I can't remember, something like that. And so we might worry about the future of our church in our country. But as a number of you said, and as John rightly says here, they were never really part of us to begin with.

[16:25] They were cultural Christians, not genuine Christians. Of course, we should pray for them and reach out to them that they might genuinely trust in Christ, but we're not to worry about the future of our church if they leave.

Don't be alarmed at Antichrist, it's the last hour. Don't worry about our church's future, they were never really part of us anyway. Nor second guess yourselves when it comes to the truth, because you know it.

Verse 20, he says, but you have an anointing from the Holy One, from God, and all of you know the truth. I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie comes from the truth.

You see, John is writing not to tell them the truth about Jesus again, but to reassure them that they already know it. did you know, by the way, that 2 plus 2 does not equal 4?

2 plus 2 does not equal 4. Did I get any of you to second guess yourselves? You're kind of thinking, what is he talking about?

[17:43] I know it equals 4. You might have even started thinking, I remember back to grade 1 where we got our mass blocks out, and here they are, the outward concrete evidence, 2 plus 2, 4.

And then my teacher confirmed it to give me inward conviction of it. I know 2 plus 2 equals 4. That's what John is trying to get us to realise here. John is reminding them that they know the truth.

They heard it, how it was based on outward evidence, not of maths blocks, but eyewitness testimony, as we saw a couple of weeks ago. And here in verse 20, they have not a teacher, but an anointing, the Holy Spirit from God, who has confirmed it, gave them an inward conviction of it.

And so says John, don't let anyone cause you to second-guess yourself. You know the truth. You know that 2 plus 2 equals 4. You know that Jesus is the Christ. You're not wrong.

They are, verse 22. Who is the liar? Well, it is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the Antichrist, denying the Father and the Son.

[18:57] No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also. You see, it's those who are the liars. And notice, if they deny the Son, verse 23, then they don't have the Father either.

and if they don't know the Father either, then they really don't have eternal life. I remember last week I showed you from John's Gospel where we talked about knowing the Father.

Jesus was praying, he says, this is eternal life, that they know you, the Father and him, whom God sent. And so if they don't have the Son, then they don't have the Father, which means they don't have eternal life.

And so says John, stick with the truth you know, verse 24, as for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and therefore in the Father.

And that means verse 25, you have what he promised us, eternal life. See what John's saying? Let the Gospel that you heard from the beginning of becoming a Christian, stay in your heart.

[20:16] For if it does, you'll remain with Christ, which in turn means remaining with the Father and as we heard last week, eternal life. Or this week, verse 25, eternal life.

What's more, John reminds them that this anointing of the Spirit they received will remain in them to help them. Verse 26 and 7. As for you, see that, sorry, verse 26, I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.

Verse 27, as for you, the anointing you receive from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things, and as his anointing is real, not counterfeit, just as it is taught you, remain in Christ.

Notice here that the spirit is not going anywhere. It's going to remain in us, which is reassuring in itself. And he will teach us all things so that we don't need others to teach us.

So does that mean then I can quit my job? Or that our kids don't need to go to school? Can my son who's doing VCE this year stop studying?

[21 : 30] The spirit will teach him all things instead. What does all things mean here? Well it's not all things about maths and science. 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? That Jesus is the Christ. And they don't need anyone not John nor these antichrists to teach them about this.

Because verse 24 they've already heard it. Or back in verse 20 the anointing the Holy Spirit from God has convinced them so they know it. And now 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. A guy from my old church called Hamish became a Christian while he was on holidays and all he was doing was he read one of the Gospels in his room he just read through one of the Gospels and all he had was the word and God's spirit that worked in his heart and that was enough to convince him of the truth.

That's why we can still read the Bible on our own and still get something out of it still know the truth. And so to help us get more out of the Bible and to grow his church God has given us teachers and we don't all have the time or the inclination to study Greek or do research and reading needed 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 then we can check what I and others say it's why I encourage you to follow along with your Bibles open and why we pray before the Bible reading so that by the spirit and his word you can check and you can know the truth because at one level the word and the spirit is all we need to know it as Jesus said to his disciples in John chapter 14 he says that he will send the Holy

[23 : 43] Spirit in his name and the spirit will teach you all things there it is again and will remind you of everything I have said to you which means by the way the spirit doesn't give us a different word from God it reminds us of the same word of God or Jesus as some Christians think they can ignore God's word because they've had a different word from the spirit which kind of is better superior but as we'll see later in chapter four it's not the Holy Spirit who's given him that word because the Holy Spirit God's Spirit never contradicts God's word they go together it's why in Ephesians chapter six the sword of the spirit is what 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 it's there in verse 27 right at the end was it teach us last three words to remain in him in

Christ we will at all times feel the pressure to go off track of Christ whether it's because the world seems appealing to us or because 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 in teaching our kids 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 we have the word and the spirit to help us remain in it and so we can have every reason to confidently stay on track and remain in Christ let's pray our gracious heavenly father we thank you for these signs here in this passage today help us to heed them to not love the world with worldly attitudes and to remember that we do know the truth that we might not be led astray but instead remain in

Christ we ask it in his name amen