

## **Back to the Gospel**

### **1 John 2:24-28**

#### **Introduction**

This passage is about coming back to and resting in the Person of Christ and the truth of the gospel. How do we keep from being led astray? Or rather, how does God keep us and preserve us (1 Pet. 1:4-5)? One of the means by which He preserves us is by calling us back to the message of the gospel itself. The fact that John writes this way shows us that even Christians seasoned in their faith need and profit from the reminder of the gospel. We should never tire of hearing it.

#### **The Abiding Gospel**

In the previous passage, John has emphasized to his readers that one cannot deny that Jesus is the Christ and be united with God. Only he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also (vs. 22-23). So, “therefore,” we should let the truth of the gospel (“that which you heard from the beginning”) abide or dwell or endure in us. If the truth about Jesus (who He is and what He’s done) remains in us, then we will remain in the Son and the Father (v. 24).

#### **The Simple Gospel**

This is of first importance because of the promise that has been given to us: eternal life (v. 25). If we do not abide in Christ, then we will be cast out and thrown into the fire and burned (John 15:6). The wages of our sin and our sinful nature is death, but the gift of God, as explained in the message of the gospel, is eternal life (Rom. 6:23). The truth of the gospel is this: that all have sinned and yet God sent His Son to take on flesh, to live a perfect life, to die on the cross as the atonement and propitiation for our sin, to be raised to new life, and to reign as Lord over heaven and earth. John says in His gospel that this all happened so that those who believe in Jesus would not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). But there are those who try to deceive God’s people, who try to get the followers of Jesus to deny that He is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). They take away from the gospel, saying that Jesus was not really a Man or not truly God. In either case, He wasn’t really the Messiah. And in doing so, they also add to the gospel, because if Jesus’ atonement on the cross did not fully accomplish our salvation, then we must believe other things, do other things, accomplish other works ourselves in order to be saved.

A gospel that has been taken away from or a gospel that has been added to is no gospel at all. It is no good news for you if Jesus’ death on the cross was not completely sufficient. If your salvation depends on you or on anyone else aside from Christ, you are sunk. The wages of sin, of any falling short of the glory of God Almighty, is death. And how can we even come close to that glory, the glory of the God who created the heavens and the earth simply by speaking them into existence, the God who manages the great courses of the planets and plans the birth of every child, designing the patterns of their DNA, the God who is holy, holy, holy.

In this we see the good news of the gospel. We are brought into fellowship with this God by means of the work of Jesus Christ. If we confess Him, we have the Father. He is our Father if

we are united with His Son. As we say in the catechism, He paid the penalty for all our sins with His precious blood and has set us free from all the power of the devil. But we must believe in this Christ, not some false savior conjured up by men or traditions or ideologies or my feelings. It is Jesus Christ as He was revealed in His life and testified of by His apostles and set down in their writings—it is that Jesus alone who saves.

### **The Anointing of the Spirit**

John goes on to remind his audience of the anointing (*chrisma*) that they have. Jesus Christ is the anointed one (remember, that's what "Christ" means), and those who are in Him have also received an anointing from the Holy Spirit. Jesus had said that He would send His Spirit to those who love Him so that the Spirit would abide with and in them (John 14:15-17). The Spirit would teach them all things (John 14:26) because He is the Spirit of truth who testifies of Jesus (John 15:26). And so, John tells his readers that since they have this anointing, since they have been given the Holy Spirit and He dwells in them, they do not need anyone to teach them. John does not mean that they do not need to be taught about anything or that there is no room for them to grow. First of all, Scripture clearly shows that teaching is something the followers of Christ need (Matt. 28:20, Heb. 5:12, Eph. 4:11-12). Second, taken woodenly, this statement would simply be a contradiction, since John himself is teaching and instructing his readers in their faith. But he calls them back to the gospel rather than adding to it. He reminds them of the same Christ that the Spirit testifies of; he does not teach a new way of salvation.

The anointing of the Spirit and the testimony the Spirit gives as He dwells in us means that we also will abide in Christ (v. 27). If you abide in Christ, then God calls on you to abide in Him (v. 28). God gives what He commands. He commands you to abide in Christ, and He gives you the means and the ability to do so.

### **Conclusion**

Here is one final application of this. How do you work out this command, to abide in Christ? Practically, day by day, how do you do this? One of the first things to do as a Christian is to do what John calls you to: let the gospel abide in you. Or as Paul says in Colossians, let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. As a Christian, do you want to abide with Jesus? Then sing His Word. Read His Word. Meditate on His Word. It is living and powerful and will make you complete and ready for every work that God has set before you to walk in (Heb. 4:12, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, Eph. 2:10).

Finally, if God has not given you faith in Christ, if He has not given you this anointing and the Spirit does not abide in you, then you cannot have fellowship with God, no matter how hard you try. But if God in His mercy grants you faith to believe in Christ, to confess that He is the Son of God and that He died for your sins and that God raised Him from the dead, then He has given you this anointing, which is the guarantee of His promise to you of eternal life (Eph. 1:13-14). And for new believers and old believers, you then will abide in Christ, not because of your faithfulness, but because of God's enduring faithfulness.