

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

A0433 -- August 15, 2004 -- 1 John 2:21-24 -- Abiding in the Truth

21 ouvk e;graya u`mi/n o[ti ouvk oi;date th.n avlh,qeian avllV o[ti oi;date auvth.n kai.
o[ti pa/n yeu/doj evk th/j avlhqei,aj ouvk e;stinÅ
*21 I did not write to you because you have not known (oida; Perfect) the truth but because
you have known it and because every kind of lie is not out of the truth.*

Here John begins with a negative reason for writing them followed by two positive reasons he wrote these Christians. This is one of the clearest verses in 1 John that shows how futile it is to try to say that 1 John was written as a book of tests of life to see whether you are really saved or not. John MacArthur and the Reformed crowd are totally at odds with John's clear statement. What does it mean that they have known the truth if not that they are genuinely saved? Let's review how John perceives his audience. In 1 John 2:12-14 John says their sins have been forgiven, they have known Him from the beginning, they have overcome the evil one, they have known the Father, that they are strong, and that the word abides in them. These statements demonstrate conclusively that most commentators are blatantly against John when they say that John's audience may not have been genuinely saved. They simply will not listen and believe the words of Scripture. If John wanted to communicate to his audience that they were not genuinely saved he could have done so easily here by saying, "I DID write to you because you have NOT known the truth." But that's not what John said. He says he wrote to them *because they have known it. known* is *oida* and is in the Perfect Active Indicative. What this means is that they had come to have a deep and useful knowledge of the truth at a past point in time which is having present results. This means they came to know a specific body of truth which was apparently basic to the Christian life. Hodges says, "John knew, even if contemporary interpreters do not, that the assurance that we possess **the truth** is the key to resisting false teaching. The professing Christian church today has lost sight of this fact and has fallen prey to innumerable doctrinal deviations."ⁱ If we are to identify false teaching, we have to have come to *know the truth*. If we don't know the truth, then we can't distinguish error. John's readers knew the truth and they knew it in its proper form. Nothing needed to be added, subtracted, or changed in meaning. John then adds that not only do they know the truth but

also that *every kind of lie is not out of the truth*. *every kind* indicates that no lie finds its source in truth. What about the little things? What about slight deviations? What about little white lies? John would say there is no such thing as a little white lie. All lies, no matter the degree or effect ever finds its source in the truth. The Revisionists (*antichrists*) were carrying doctrine that was close to the truth but it was not the truth. Therefore, it was a lie. I think we get a little too praiseworthy of Christian academics who promote false ideas and we say they are “insightful”. If it is a false idea it is categorically a *lie*. I’ve heard Christian scholars over and over saying how theologically wrong another Christian Scholar is on a point of doctrine and then in the next breath they say, however, this does not mean that he is not a pious individual. I suggest we don’t make that connection. When we do that, we are trying not to outright condemn another individual but we make out like good morality can come out of false doctrine. I can’t do that. I can’t say that good application, good morality is coming out of false doctrine. That is an absurd idea. Now, they may be pious in other areas but we have to be careful to always keep the connection between true doctrine and good morality. What may appear good can often be the covert operation of the old sin nature. We can’t praise piety for the sake of piety. We have to call these teachings what they really are, *lies*.

22 Ti,j evstin o` yeu,sthj eiv mh. o` avrnou,menoj o[ti Vihsou/j ouv k e;stin o` Cristo,jÈ
ou-to,j evstin o` avnti,cristoj(o` avrnou,menoj to.n pate,ra kai. to.n ui`o,nÅ
22 *Who is the liar if not the one denying that Jesus is not the Christ; this is the antichrist, the one denying the Father and the Son.*

This is the lie that John has in mind; the denial that *Jesus is...the Christ*. *Jesus* is his human name, the name that the angel told Mary to name her son. *Christ* is the equivalent of the Hebrew “Messiah” and refers to the “anointed one of Israel”, prophesied to be both God and man. When one believes that *Jesus is the Christ* he is born again (1 John 5:1). Anyone who denies this truth is a *liar* because he denies the very basis upon which anyone is eternally saved. It is crucial to understand John’s theology here. In Johannine thought believing that Jesus is the Christ guarantees two things: eternal life and resurrection. This is plainly seen in Jesus’ discourse with Martha in John 11:25-27. “*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."* Belief that *Jesus is the Christ* is crucial in John’s theology because it is Jesus Christ who imparts eternal life and promises resurrection to everyone who believes in Him (John 11:25-26). From John’s perspective the gospel is quite simple. All one must do to be saved is believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

It is very important to keep the gospel pure in modern times because it is so easy to add something to the simple gospel. Turn to Gal. 1:6-9. Notice in v. 6 how easy it is for believers to leave the true gospel, to make some addition to the gospel which is really no gospel at all. Gospel simply means “good news” and the good news is that all one has to do is believe. We don’t have to be circumcised, if we did then only men could be saved, we don’t have to walk an aisle, we don’t have to commit our lives to Christ, we don’t have to promise we won’t do it again, we don’t have to give up drinking, smoking, dancing, or going with the boys (or girls) that do. All we have to do is *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. But history has shown time and again that it is so very easy for people to make additions to the gospel. Human nature just has to add its part. But when we try to add something, when we try to cooperate with God in salvation the entire message is destroyed. When a person does more than simply believe he has distorted the gospel. And a distorted gospel does not save! God doesn’t do 99% of the work and we have to add our 1%. God does 100% of the work and we simply believe it. But don’t I just have to do a little bit? No, God does it all. What can you add to the finished work of Christ? Not a thing. Anything you try to add detracts from the finished work of Christ. Faith is the sole condition of salvation. Some say that if we believe then we have added to salvation. This is not true. Faith adds nothing to salvation because faith is not a work (Rom. 4:4-5). God saves, we receive that salvation by faith. Salvation is a gift of God. Faith is simply having confidence in the person of Jesus Christ for your eternal salvation. It’s reliance on Christ and Christ alone that saves. Some more things people have added to the gospel are water baptism, public confession, speaking in tongues, praying, asking Jesus into their hearts, infant baptism, confirmation, penance, holy orders, anointing the sick, and many more. All additions to the pure and simple gospel are serious. According to Paul those who propagate false gospels are to be accursed (Gk. anathema). So, all we have to do is believe.

But what is believing? Believing is simply having confidence in the person of Jesus Christ for one’s eternal salvation. It is not a “leap of faith” as the Existentialist Philosopher Soren Kierkegaard claimed. If it were a “leap of faith” then it is totally unreasonable, blind, and irrational. Biblical faith is not blind, it is not unreasonable, it is not irrational. Biblical faith is not only reasonable it is the most reasonable thing for a person to do. And God made the gospel so simple that a child could believe it, and yet so complex that once we are saved, we can spend the rest of our lives digging into it and coming to know the nature, structure, and purpose of salvation.

However, for the gospel to be effective it must be an understood gospel. If one does not understand the biblical content of the words then the gospel is impotent to save. If a

foreigner were speaking to you his words would have little to no effect on you because you don't understand the words. The same is true for the gospel. It must be understood to be effective. Paul gives us this analogy in **1 Corinthians 14:9-11** *“So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰ There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. ¹¹ If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.”* This is another reason we ought to be so thankful that the word of God has come to us in the English language. If it were not for William Tyndale, we wouldn't have an English Bible and you could not be saved unless you learned Latin or Greek because the words apart from understanding don't save. So, two things are necessary; *first*, keep the gospel message pure and *second*, make sure the terms of the gospel are understood. Making sure the terms are understood means defining the words biblically, words like sin, Christ, grace, faith, etc. So, our job is to keep the gospel pure and to make the gospel understandable. It's not our job to save people, only God can do that.

As we said last week, the major religions today that *deny that Jesus is the Christ* are Judaism, Latter Day Saints, Mormonism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, New Age Mysticism, etc. All of these religions deny that Jesus is the Christ. Conservative Judaism is still waiting on the Christ, Latter Day Saints claim Jesus was a created being, Mormonism also claims that Jesus was a created being, Hinduism has 300,000 different gods and goddesses, Buddhism denies the supernatural and believes in naturalistic materialism, Islam believes Jesus was a messenger and prophet, New Age Mysticism believes that each one of us is God. The one thing all these religions have in common is that they do not believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. All that to say that there are two groups of men on the earth; *Christians* and *non-Christians*. All of these religions are what John calls *antichrists* because they deny the one way of salvation God has revealed to us. It is clear from this verse that if the false teachers denied that Jesus was the Christ then this would undermine their faith that Jesus was the Christ. Then they would doubt their salvation and if they doubted that their salvation then they would lose their fellowship with God. And fellowship with God is one of the major themes of this book. (1 John 1:3-4). It is a serious issue when a believer lacks assurance of salvation. When we lack assurance, we can never progress in the Christian life. It is the assurance of salvation that motivates us to live by the Spirit. John's readers were in danger of being swayed into false views of their salvation and this would make them impotent in the Christian life.

23 pa/j o` avrnou,menoj to.n ui`o.n ouvde. to.n pate,ra e;cei(o` o`mologw/n to.n ui`o.n kai. to.n pate,ra e;cei

23 Every one denying the Son has not the Father, the one acknowledging the Son has the Father.

Two things are taught here in v. 23: *first*, that **denial** and **acknowledgment** are opposites in Scripture. To deny something is to fail to acknowledge it and to acknowledge something is to refuse to deny it. The call to the Christian is to acknowledge our sin to restore fellowship with God (1 John 1:9). When we fail to acknowledge our sin, it amounts to a denial of our sin and calling God a liar (1 John 1:10). *Second*, the Son and the Father are so closely related in John's theology that a denial of one is a denial of the other and acknowledgement of one is acknowledgment of the other. It is impossible to tear the Son and the Father apart. They are unified in essence. Distinct persons but one in essence. Jesus said in John's gospel, "**I and the Father are one**" (John 10:30). This of course means they were *one in essence*. Jesus also said, "**He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me.**"⁴⁵ "**He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me.**" (John 12:44-45). To believe in the Son is to believe in the Father, to see the Son is to see the Father. This is because the Father and the Son are a unity in essence. God is one in essence and three in person. We state this truth so nonchalantly today but this actually took many centuries to formulate. This does not mean that the doctrine of the deity of Christ was invented in the fourth century. Dr. Hannah says, "Christians have always believed in the deity of Christ, but it took serious reflection upon the Scriptures, as well as other circumstances, to explain (not invent) that doctrine."ⁱ Two things take place to stimulate explanation of doctrine. Dr. Hannah elaborates when he says, "It is in the context of the attacks of the enemies of the church, and also of the serious inquiries of those inside the church, that theology has developed."ⁱⁱⁱ So, as you can see from 1 John and 2 John the enemies of Christianity were already attacking the person of Christ. Thus, the church was forced to deal with the issue.

In the early church several Christian heresies resulted as godly men tried to explain the doctrine of the person of Christ. I will only mention a few. If we were studying the Person of Christ in detail, we could look at all the heresies spawned but that would really take too much time today. The two most common heresies were Modalism (aka Sabellianism) and Arianism. Modalism had two forms; the most common form taught that since God is one then He cannot be three at the same time ($1 \neq 3$). Thus, God could only manifest Himself in one of the three forms at any given time (God puts on different faces or masks. He's role playing). This had several problems of course, but one in particular was John 17. In John 17 we have the "real" Lord's Prayer (the prayer most people call the Lord's Prayer from the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord could never pray). This is where Jesus Christ was praying to the Father. Now, if Modalism is true then we just have role playing here. God is playing Jesus when He prays to the Father and then He changes roles and plays the Father

in hearing the prayer. Well, that doesn't work. Modalism is not a clear explanation of the distinction between the Father and the Son. A second heresy was Arianism. Arianism taught that the Son was created by the Father (from phrases such as "only begotten", "begotten of God"). However, if the Son was created then He is not eternal. If He is not eternal then He is not God (*heteroousian*). And if He's not God then His death on the cross was just one among millions of human deaths and cannot provide salvation. Then there was a group of Semi-Arians who were not content with Christ being a mere creature. They taught that Christ was not a creature, that He was just as eternal as the Father, but that Christ was of a *like substance*, not the *same substance* as the Father (*homoiousian*). There were many other attempted explanations, for example, today in Sunday school we looked at Docetism in 2 John 7, the view of Christ that denied His true humanity and finds its roots in the Chain of Being. Finally, there were the Athanasians who taught that Christ was of the *same substance* as the Father (*homoousian*). This is the orthodox position. The Son is not less than the Father as Modalism, Arianism, Semi-Arianism, and Docetism taught in the early centuries of the church. So, these doctrines are not easy. *We state them very nonchalantly but they actually took centuries to explain. Athanasius became the key theologian in formulating the doctrine (and he was a young theologian). The Council of Nicea in 325AD during the rule of Constantine who Christianized Rome was definitive in its formulating the Son's relationship to God and the Father.*

24 u`mei/j o] hvkou,sate avpV avrch/j(evn u`mi/n mene,twÅ eva.n evn u`mi/n mei,nh| o] avpV avrch/j hvkou,sate(kai. u`mei/j evn tw/| ui`w/| kai. evn tw/| patri. menei/teÅ
24 As for you, let that abide (meno) in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you shall abide in the Son and in the Father.

Verses 22-23 dealt with the close relationship between the Son and the Father, the unity of essence in the Godhead, but verse 24 draws out the Christians connection to the Son and the Father. The Christians connection to the Son and the Father comes through abiding in that which they **heard from the beginning. from the beginning** refers to the moment they became believers (1 John 2:7). No one is born a believer, everyone who becomes a believer comes to faith in Christ at a particular point in time and all believers should be taught basic truths of Christianity. If you have not then I would suggest a couple of books that can help; *Basic Theology* by Charles Ryrie and/or *A Survey of Christian Doctrine* also by Charles Ryrie. Many Christians never get basic Bible doctrine into the soul of their mentality. No one ever teaches it to them. So, the result is that Christians get sidetracked in the Christian life. They get duped into thinking that it's enough to go and sing some songs with the youth group, or show up for a sharing time where we all hold hands, or even where we get together and share what this verse means to me. What happens is they confuse emotional

feelings with spirituality and being close to God. I've been in this boat before. Anyone can get emotional. But emotions are never connected with spirituality in the Bible. That's a false connection. Did you know that Satan can hear your prayers? When you pray, he can hear your prayers, too. And there are many instances of Christians praying outside of the general or specific will of God for their life and Satan hears and answers those prayers. The Christian gets what he or she prayed for and thinks that God answered their prayer. Many times, I have heard Christians talk about a tingly feeling they got during all this. This does not mean it is God. Satan wants you to feel a certain way and he can create a spiritual environment that makes you think you are being spiritual. The problem is that it may have nothing to do with the content of Scripture. We hate to think that we can be deceived but Satan is much more brilliant than you or I. If he could deceive 1/3 of the entire angelic realm don't you think that he could deceive you? He's a creature, but he's a brilliant creature, and he has been investigating human nature for over 6,000 years. He knows how we operate and he knows how to distract us from the word of God. John here is telling you that in order to avoid the deceptive teachings of the Revisionists (*antichrists*) you have to *let* the truth *abide in you*. Abide is John's favorite word *meno* which means "to remain, to dwell". This is what I call keeping your eyes on the instruments. In Seminary, one of the first classes we take is hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the science of interpreting literature. (Greek god Hermes). People think that theology is a religious thing and not a scientific endeavor. When I was working as a biologist in Lubbock and told my co-workers that I was leaving to pastor a church my co-workers thought that I was abandoning science for religion. That couldn't be farther from the truth. As a biologist I looked at data that I had to interpret in some way. In theology I'm doing the same thing, I look at the data of Scripture and have to interpret it in some way. Well, that's what hermeneutics is all about. It's the science of interpreting literature. It sets the ground rules, the boundaries for interpreting a piece of literature, whether it's Seventeen Magazine, the US Constitution, the Wall Street Journal, a school textbook, or the Bible, it doesn't matter, there are rules for interpretation. And the key to interpreting Scripture is keeping your eyes on the Scripture. It's like flying a plane. Many of you here are pilots, many of you are not but any pilot will tell you that you flying is a dangerous thing. You can't fly by your feelings. It's not like driving a car because often you get in a situation where you don't have a reference point. You look out in the sky and there's no road underneath you and you can't see the ground because of the cloud cover and maybe its nighttime too and so you may feel like you are flying straight and parallel to the ground but you crash the plan right into the ground or a cliff. This happens all the time. Pilots will tell you that you have to fly by the instruments on your panel. You've got to forget how your body feels and fly strictly according to what the instrumentation on the dash of the plane says. That's the only thing that will keep you on course and keep you from crashing the plan. The moment you take

your eyes off the instruments you're dead. And as bible-believing Christians we have to keep our eyes on the Scripture. It's hard to learn this lesson because it is so easy in our day to get our eyes off the Scripture and on the world around us. You're dead when you do this. That's what John means when he says "let the message that you heard from the beginning abide in you." Let the truth become your best friend, let it become your reference point for everything. The Psalmist said it this way, "Thy word I have hidden in my heart that I may not sin against Thee." This is so important because if you do keep your eyes on the Scripture, if you do make it a habit to make Scripture your ultimate reference point for everything then *you shall abide in the Son and in the Father*. The implication is that if you don't then you are separated from Christ. You are buying into what Paul calls the *elementary principles of the world* (Col. 2:8). And once you've bought into the *stoichea* (elementary principles) of the world then guess what, you can't discern *antichrists*, you can't discern *false teaching*. So, the principle is this; to the degree that you have stored DVP in the mentality of your soul, to that degree you will be able to discern *false teaching*. To the degree that you have stored HVP in the mentality of your soul, to that degree you will buy into the world system. You won't be able to discern truth from error. So, there is a proportional relationship between DVP and abiding as well as HVP and not abiding. There is no neutrality. Either you are abiding or not abiding in Christ. You can't be neutral. Either you are taking every thought captive to Christ and knowing all things in relation to Christ or you are against God and serving the world.

So, here's how this all works. As Christians, we want to win the day-by-day battles in our own lives; but if fundamental Christianity is going to win any battles in the big picture of things, we are going to have to do a lot more. God was written into the foundation of our nation and now He is being written out; Roe v. Wade (abortion), prayer in schools, the word "God" in various US documents, the Ten Commandments can't be posted, Homosexual Marriage, etc. Why are these things happening? What went wrong? Well, quite frankly we have been lazy; we haven't seen it coming. It's like we got blindsided. This is happening because of failure for Christians to take Bible doctrine into every area of life. We have failed to see the Big Picture. We've let secular humanists do the science and then we did this with every area of life: art, music, philosophy, relationship to family, relationship to friends, relationship to society, marriage, sex, history, government, and all the aspects of culture. And we said, "We'll let the secular world take these areas and we'll just focus on the spiritual." And what we were really doing was compartmentalizing. We were saying, in effect, that the Bible doesn't speak to these other areas. And now we're seeing the effects. So, we have to break out of this compartmentalizing of Scripture. This involves taking Bible doctrine into the mentality of your soul and then applying it to these areas of life. People aren't going to like it, but it's the only road back. Let me give you an

example. Let's say you begin taking in Bible doctrine and assimilating it in the mentality of your soul. And, as you go about life, you begin to apply that doctrine to the world around you. It begins to flesh its way out as you think about the various areas of life. Let's say you go to an art museum and you say, "Oh, I don't like this painting," and people call you a narrow-minded bigot, because you don't like the painting. "Open your mind! This is just an expression of a unique individual." Yeah, but the problem is that DVP says that this painting lacks definite form; this painting doesn't correspond to reality; this painting reflects chaos; this painting does not reflect God's character. And so, your application of Bible doctrine to art is not going to be well accepted. But if you want Christianity to continue, we have to learn the fact that God has spoken about every area of life and God does have an opinion about art and all art is not legitimate.

So, we have got to let the word of God abide in us richly and to the degree that we will be abiding in Christ and rejecting *antichristian* ideas and thought patterns.

ⁱ Hodges, Zane, *The Epistles of John* (Irving, TX: Grace Evangelical Society, 1999), 112.

ⁱⁱ Hannah, John, *Our Legacy: The History of Christian Doctrine* (Colorado Springs, CO: NAV Press, 2001), 24.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hannah, John, *Our Legacy: The History of Christian Doctrine* (Colorado Springs, CO: NAV Press, 2001), 24.

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