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| **True or False**  I John 2:15-27  Vine & Branch Community Church  March 6, 2022 |

In our introduction to Johns Epistle, we learned that the main purpose of his letter is to help Christians REST and LIVE in the TRUTH that flows from FELLOWSHIP with God. Therefore, the goal of discerning what is true or false is to be able to rest in our fellowship with God the Father through the work of Jesus Christ, and to share The Truth of his loving rescue through our words, lives, and love to others.

Over the past two weeks we looked as John unpacked these fundamental points:

1. **God is light**; he is absolute/pure truth (in him is no darkness at all). The LORD says, through His Word he communicates absolute truth to people, and those **who receive him**, who **receive his truth**, **are changed completely in every aspect of life**. They become light walkers and truth practicers. So, the first week we looked at the foundation of discerning how to discern light; when teaching is true vs. false
2. Last week we asked, “what does it mean to practice truth?” **Being people of light who practice truth** is **a natural overflow of being in fellowship with God** and ***as a matter of first importance,*** has a profound impact on the way we live in the world (practice truth.) I want to repeat something I said last week, the Bible is not teaching that we are to engage politics or push against tyranny as a measure of first importance. However, as **truth and light emanate** from both our speaking and living, we *will* at points find ourselves engaging culture and even politics.
   1. Especially as cultural truths and politics increasingly encroach on the realm of God’s law and morality, **which they are**, we will, simply by sharing the gospel, be speaking to cultural and political issues (1 Cor 6:9-11).
      * So, if we say, “*I don’t want speak to political issues*” then simply by seeking to avoid them, the platform from which we share the gospel will shrink, and the world speaking its false gospels will continue to increase. IOW: if we give up ground every time someone in the world plants their flag and yells, “*it’s a political issue*!” we will soon have no ground at all!
      * The early reformer Martin Luther said this*, “If I profess with loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except that little point which the world and the Devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ.”*
   2. Here is what John wants us to know: As sons/daughters we are in fellowship with God, **and therefore walkers in light and practicers of truth**. Therefore, we will **emanate light and truth** without shrinking **regardless of the arena in which that places us**.

Today, we are going to look at Johns next section and make some further applications of what it means for us to live in FELLOWSHIP with God. WALK IN THE LIGHT and PRACTICE TRUTH (2:15-27)

*“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* ***16*** *For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.* ***17*** *And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

*Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist* [sng.]*is coming, so now many antichrists* [pl.] *have come. Therefore, we know that it is the last hour* [theologically vs. chronologically]*.* ***19*** *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 all are not of us.* ***20*** *But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and* ***you all have knowledge****.* (You didn’t miss anything; they don’t have something you don’t)

***21*** *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.* ***22*** *Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.* ***23*** *No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.* ***24*** *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.* ***25*** *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.* ***27*** *But the anointing that you received 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.”*

Let me highlights some key points John is making:

1. There are people who love the world, even though it is passing away. They love the world because they have no other kingdom, it is the only thing that is, or that matters). (2:15-17)
2. There is an aniti-Christ who is coming who is “*the liar*” who denies Jesus as the Christ (2:18-22)
   * We know from other scripture; this anti-Christ *will be a* ***political figure*** (Rev 13:7)
   * He is/will be promoting a **counterfeit gospel** saying, “*Jesus is unnecessary, you don’t need him neither does culture, or the world.”* (2:22b)
   * Every political figure who ever comes on the scene must address the reality of what they think about God (Jesus). This will be true of the anti-christ; he will deny, down play, or dismiss Jesus as relevant or necessary.
3. There are mini anti-christs who have already come their message is smaller in stage, but the same as the anti-christ (v. 18), they lie and deceive: “Jesus is irrelevant or of no value.” And they counter with **alternative gospels**. IOW: they have alternative “saviors” or “good news.” And in order to “be saved” you must adhere to the “truth” of their gospel.
4. There will be those who have claimed to follow Jesus, but will listen to these false gospels and “*fall away*” that is sad, but expected and should not dishearten the Christian (2:18, 19).
5. John’s hearers have all the truth they need to see the issues clearly, to expose those lies, speak truth, and to abide - live - in fellowship with the Lord (2:24, 27).
6. In this passage John is addressing a particular false Gospel that his hearers should have confidence they are seeing clearly as false = early Gnosticism
7. Paul also, like John, identifies and calls out false (counterfeit) gospels for his people (Gal 1:6-10).

*“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—* ***7*** *not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.* ***8*** *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.* ***9*** *As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”*

Like Paul and John, as one of your pastors/shepherds, I share these responsibilities as well:

1. To **teach The Word**; to hold forth Truth **as God has delivered it**, attempting to stay as close to what he says as I possibly know how, and to do this without wavering, caving, compromising or virtue signaling (1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 4:2; Titus 1:9, 10).
2. Protect the Church from false gospels by calling out and identifying them, understanding/illuminating them in light of truth (Acts 20:17; 28-31).
3. To bring myself, along with the rest of the church, in joyful submission to God’s truth (1 Tim 4:15).

Two of the counterfeit gospels I am compelled to call out and identify, as I believe pressing on the church today, globally and locally are:

1. Gospel of relative vs. objective truth (this week)
2. Gospel of cultural Marxism or socialism (next week)

Both of these dangerous and counterfeit gospels, *and their consequent sub-teachings*, are not just penetrating our culture, but the Church of Jesus Christ. Both of these gospels have their **own god** and **prophets** who proclaim them. They hold forth key **tenants of faith**, they possess a **doctrine of sin** and punishment, they propose methods of **salvation**, and paint pictures of a **utopian society** made up of ideal citizens.

Let me say clearly; ***Truth is not relative***. People do not determine truth based on what is best for them. Many of you might agree, however based on Barna’s research, 51% of the **evangelical church** believes that truth is relative. That means you will run into people who will say they are Christians, but will also say, “*That is true for me, but may not be true for everyone else. As long as I am sincere, or other people are sincere in the truth they believe, we will all eventually get to God.”*

John would say an emphatic, “Not TRUE!” Remember from last week, John opens his letter making great effort to ensure what they are hearing is absolute objective truth. *“I (we) were there, we saw it all, HE is light, HE is true, nothing false about Him, this is the message we have heard from him and deliver to you; Objective truth starts and ends with the Lord regardless of anyone else’s opinion.”*

But note: that is not a majority opinion then, nor today. Relative truth has been a counterfeit gospel around since the beginning, “*Did God really say? Did he really mean that? I mean, that seems so narrow… what do you believe is true about what God said?*” Even in the N.T. in conversation with Jesus, Pilot asks rhetorically, “*What is truth*?”

One of the main more modern prophets for the gospel of relativism is the French 18th century philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau. Rousseau taught that the **individual should decide on their own** what is **right or wrong, true or false**, without external moral pressures of religion, tradition, culture, laws, and social pressures. He captures the belief system of post-modernism (extreme form of relativism) in one of his most famous quotes stating, “*There is a way to live life that is*my *way, if I do not live*my *life my way, I miss the point of*my*life.  I miss what being human is for*me.”  IOW: “Who are you to impose your values on me?” This is Moral Relativism.

Even more modern and operating in conservative circles, Robert Ringer, author of the *New Your Times* Bestselling “*Restoring the American Dream*” wrote in 2018, *“I would argue that debating objective truth versus relativism is an unnecessary exercise. All civilized people – repeat, civilized people – know right from wrong without having to refer to scripture, the Constitution, or any other written words.”*

There are many prophets of the gospel of relativism in both liberal and conservative circles. The god of the revivalism gospel **is “self.”** The means of salvation is **self-realization** (following your heart) - **being true to yourself**. The unpardonable sin is claiming objective truth that extends over the lives of others. Utopia is everyone living in blissful non-judgment, and doing what is right in their own eyes.

In this country, since the 1960’s we have seen a progressive decline in the belief in objective truth. However, in the last 2 years in particular we have experienced a profoundly accelerated upheaval of that truth. So much so that I believe families with children under 8 will have to help their children understand objective truth, where it comes from, and how it relates to cultural issues in ways I didn’t have to because it was assumed in so many aspects of our country and if not in our country in the church. That is simply no longer true.

Truth, according to the moral relativist, is derived from each individual. There is no objective, external standard for right and wrong or that is valid for everyone. No one standard of true and false, right or wrong, good or bad, can preempt any other standard. Rules are not divinely derived (Judeo-Christian); they are personally or culturally derived. “Truth” is the collective standards of people and cultures that proceeded. So, a moral relativist would say, “To make these changes we must educate people, we must legislate these changes, we must get “the good news” out and recruit other believers. We are a new culture of people, evolving into a new era; therefore, we can create new standards, and new realities… then everyone will be free, then everyone can be themselves, everyone can be their own god!”

The reason we are talking about this false gospel is that it is the basis for other false doctrines that we are currently facing: indoctrination on college campuses against God, sexual perversion/pornography, gender identity, same sex marriage, overreaching government mandates, legalization of hallucinogenic drugs, abortion rights, or now even the attempt to legalize/normalize pedophilia all find their foundation upon the idea of moral relativism.

I think why many people in the church bristle at sermons like this is for three primary reasons:

1. We simply do not like conflict, that is to say relational discomfort.
2. It seems overwhelming; to be able to address all these cultural realties that are bombarding us.
3. We are insecure in our own beliefs. For many years objective truth was assumed. We didn’t have to defend or explain it. No longer true. We are going to have to learn to **understand our identity and love truth at a whole new level** that is a good thing.

But John’s Gospel has answers for us. In response to these I believe John would say,

1. I get conflict is hard and uncomfortable, but because of the world you live in it is inevitable. The question is not how can I avoid relational conflict, the question is where do you it? With God or with man?
2. You don’t have to know all the intricacies of all the political issues, you already have all the truth you need and don’t need anyone to teach you.
3. You do need to know why you believe what you believe in ways that you can walk it out, live it and give testimony, or talk to others about it with joyful, unwavering confidence!

Those are some general applications, but as we wrap up let’s unpack them with a little more detail:

1. Don’t confuse your citizenship in heaven and speaking truth, with your U.S. citizenship and standing up for political issues. (2:15-17)Or John says, “Don’t love the world.” This imperative from John is really important for a few reasons;
   1. We are reminded that anyone who loves the world, the desires of the flesh, the eyes and the pride of life is not of the Father. Loving the Father, walking in light, practicing truth are ways we know we are in fellowship/friendship with Him. Anyone who is hung up on acquiring material possessions and organizes their life around temporary possessions is not organizing their life around fellowship with God the Father.
   2. Its also further evidence that what we are talking about regarding application of this passage is not about loving a country that is passing away. I grew up in a very pro-American era, and a very pro-American, pro veteran family. If you have ever been with my mom at a parade, you would see my example. Awesome. Love it.
   3. But we cannot confuse our citizenship as a U.S. citizen with our citizenship in heaven. Many of us have confused our commitment to living out the truth of heaven with defending the freedoms that we enjoy in this country and the material benefits that come with it. This is a primary reason I believe many of us say, “I don’t involve myself in political conversations.” In application I would say to that, “You don’t have to.” However, those of us who belong to the Lord and live for the kingdom of heaven have been made truth lovers, truth speakers, and truth practicers, and we will do that with joy and confidence even if that puts us into a political arena.
2. Don’t be disheartened or unsettled when others “go out from us.” Again said, but it is going to happen. This ought not to cause you to question your own understanding of truth. (2:18-20)
3. Be confident in the truth that you have received and LOVE it.
   1. It has been handed down to us from first hand participants (1:1-5)
   2. The Spirit (anointing) by which we have understood the truth (you don’t understand without him) continues to live in you (2:21-27)

Eugene Peterson has a great paraphrase, *“But they’re no match for what is embedded deeply within you—Christ’s anointing, no less! You don’t need any of their so-called teaching. Christ’s anointing teaches you the truth on everything you need to know about* ***yourself and him****, uncontaminated by a single lie. Live deeply in what you were taught.”*

1. REST in and LOVE the FATHER who has given TRUTH to you (2:28, 3:1)

*“Now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.* ***29*** *If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.* ***3:1*** *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.*