

## 1 John 2:24-27

### Verse 24

In verse 24, John transitions to talk about the new life enjoyed by his readership. He says, “What you have heard from the beginning is to remain in you. If what you have heard from the beginning remains in you, then you will remain in the Son and in the Father.” The personal pronoun (“you”) at the beginning of the verse is emphatic in the original language.<sup>1</sup> John’s syntax shows that he was driven by a sense of urgency to teach readers about the life they possessed in Christ.

He wanted them to remember what they had “heard from the beginning.” The word translated “heard” was used in the Bible to speak of the simple act of auditory hearing (Matthew 2:3). However, Jesus also used it to speak of the special type of hearing through which disciples learn the truth of God.<sup>2</sup> Used in this way, the term speaks of a formal listening through which one hears and accepts what has been heard.<sup>3</sup> In implementing the term, John intends to remind his readers of the things they had been taught from the apostles. So far in his letter, he has frequently spoken of how they had heard God’s truth in the past (1 John 1:1, 3, and 5: 2:7 and 18). He will make more references to his readers’ initial “hearing” of the gospel before his letter is complete (1 John 3:11; 4:3 and 6).

To place emphasis on the way in which they had initially heard the gospel, John mentions what they had heard “from the beginning.” The word translated “beginning” is one of John’s favorite technical terms in his writings. He used it as a moniker for Jesus in John 1:1. As a title for our Lord, it depicted Him as being the first principle of all creation. Here, John uses the word to speak of a period of time that comes before another. In this sense, it portrays a relative beginning of time.<sup>4</sup> According to the context of our passage, John uses it to refer to his readers’ first experiences in Christian discipleship. He likely means to remind them of the first time they heard the gospel, and their initial development in the Christian faith. He used the term this way elsewhere in both his first (1 John 2:7 and 3:11) and second (2 John 5 and 6) epistles.

As we have seen throughout this epistle, John’s readers needed to be reminded of the truth they had heard “from the beginning” (1 John 1:1 and 3:11). Gnostic heretics were beckoning them to back away from the rudimentary truths of Christ. As a result, John shows an ongoing concern that his readers stick to the first principles of Christian teaching and doctrine.

There is an ever-present temptation in spiritual matters for God’s people to continually seek after something new (Acts 17:21). Novel and exciting doctrines often cause God’s children to forsake the foundations of the faith. Because the basics may seem boring, and because they often aren’t obeyed as they ought to be, God’s children are sometimes tempted to look for something that is clever and new. Strong Christians stick to the stuff. They remember the first principles, and they place their hope in the rudimentary teaching of the gospel. They know that spiritual strength, security, and satisfaction is found in sticking with the old, old story of Jesus.

In the latter part of verse 24, John describes the benefit one derives from remaining faithful to the foundational truths of Christ. He says, “If what you have heard from the beginning remains in you, then you will remain in the Son and in the Father.” Notice the end result of a commitment to God’s truth. It revolves around the word “remain.” The original language of the text uses a word that literally meant “to stay.” It was also used to speak of a

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<sup>1</sup> Robertson, [CD-Rom].

<sup>2</sup> Zodhiates, [CD-Rom].

<sup>3</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 594.

<sup>4</sup> Zodhiates, [CD-Rom].

lodging or dwelling place. It could be rendered “to live.”<sup>5</sup> One has pointed out that the word expresses the idea of a continuing relationship.<sup>6</sup> As such it picturesquely depicts the close relationship with God and Jesus believers enjoy when they keep their faith in the first truths of the gospel. Faith-filled followers of Christ, as one has said, remain united in heart, mind, and will to God the Father and His Son.<sup>7</sup>

It is important to draw our attention to the subjects of this relational connection. John is intentional to mention both “the Son” and “the Father.” Reference to the Son is intentional. The Gnostic heretics minimized the importance of Jesus. They dismissed Him as a mere emanation in a hierarchy of angelic beings. Because of this snub, John is strategic to make much of Jesus in his epistle. He regularly refers to Him as “the Son” (1:3 and 7; 2:22 and 23; 3:8 and 23; 4:9, 10, 14 and 15; 5:5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 20). He continually reminds his readers that Jesus is God, and that the truth of God will lead one into an abiding relationship with Jesus. At the close of his letter, he will express his concern for his readers to experience “this life” in “the Son” (1 John 5:11-12).

Along with “the Son,” John mentions “the Father.” Grouped together with his reference to Jesus, this term puts God the Father and God the Son on the same level. The pairing is meant to assert the Divine nature of Jesus. John means to give a rebuttal to the Gnostics who de-deified our Lord. He did something similar in 1 John 2:22.

The title “Father” is also meant to evoke thoughts of companionship and relational intimacy. Remember Jesus’ usage of this same word in Matthew 6:6. When He taught us to pray, He said we are to pray, “Our Father in heaven...”. John’s words in our verse remind us that we have a personal connection with both Jesus and God the Father. Such an abiding relationship with God was enjoyed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:8), and it will be a hallmark of the New Heaven and the New Earth (Revelation 21:3).

For now, believers experience it through the gospel. Jesus used the same verbiage from our current text to speak of the intimate connection we enjoy with Him. In John’s Gospel, He said, “The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him” (John 6:56). In the famous vine and branches passage, He said:

Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples (John 15:4-8).

Christians who keep their eyes of faith fixed on the first principles of the gospel are promised to enjoy a close, ongoing relationship with Jesus and God. By staying grounded in the truth of the Lord, they stay connected to the Lord. When life is bad, blessed, or boring, they have a friend who sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24). The Lord walks with His children through the various seasons and struggles of life. As a result, they can boldly sing with the Psalmist, “Lord, you have been our refuge in every generation” (Psalm 90:1)..

### **Verse 25**

John continues his discussion concerning the abiding life of Christ in verse 25 by reflecting upon the promises Jesus made while on Earth. He says, “And this is the promise that he

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<sup>5</sup> Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, [CD-Rom].

<sup>6</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 594.

<sup>7</sup> Zodiates, [CD-Rom].

himself made to us: eternal life” (1 John 2:25). The word translated “promise” is one that referred to an announcement or a pledge.<sup>8</sup> It depicted a declaration made by a person concerning something he or she would certainly accomplish. Used of the Lord, it speaks of “God’s pronouncements that provide assurance of what he intends to do.”<sup>9</sup>

As Christians, we are recipients of “great and precious promises” through Christ (2 Peter 1:4). Though we were once cut off from God, we are now a part of “a better covenant which has been established on better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). The guarantee of such promises should be transformative for us. Paul reasoned that because of them “we should cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Eternal life is the promise John has his eyes on in verse 25. The word translated “life” is the basic Koine Greek word that referred to physical life, the opposite of death.<sup>10</sup> As used in our current text, however, it speaks of supernatural life — the abundant and overflowing life of Jesus that comes to us as a gift from God (John 10:10). Paul spoke of this concept, detailing how we have “the promise of life in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:1). John referenced the new life we enjoy through Jesus on numerous occasions throughout his first epistle (1 John 1:1 and 2, 3:14; 5:12 and 16).

In our current text, the word for life (zōē) is coupled together with the word for “eternal” (aiōnios). Together, the two terms depict the unique type of life enjoyed by Christians. John speaks of it on several occasions in his first letter (1:2; 3:15; 5:11, 13, and 20). Jesus promised that believers would receive such life on numerous occasions in John’s Gospel (John 3:15, 16 and 36; 4:14; 5:24; 6:47 and 54; 10:28; 12:25; and 17:2). The apostle is likely referencing those promises in our current verse.<sup>11</sup>

Contrary to popular opinion, eternal life is not just the act of “living forever.” It involves much more than life that is endless in duration. Coupled together zōē and aiōnios depict the qualitatively and quantitatively better type of life that Christians enjoy. It is qualitatively better because it is marked by a relationship with God the Father and His Son. Jesus made mention of this reality when He said, “This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent—Jesus Christ” (John 17:3).

Eternal life is also quantitatively better because it keeps one safe from the second death (Revelation 20:13-15). If one is in Christ, he or she will never be separated from Christ. Neither the grave or hell will prove victorious. Life will be enjoyed with the Father, Son, and the Spirit in the New Heaven and New Earth forever and ever (Revelation 21:1-2). Jesus spoke of this reality, saying, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:14-16).

Eternal life is the life for which we were originally created (Genesis 1:26-27), but something spoiled it. When sin entered into the human condition, the experience of real life was thwarted (Genesis 2:17 and 3:7). Now all of humanity is under the curse of sin. As a result, eternal life is not experienced by default. It doesn’t come with physical birth. One must be spiritually born anew (John 3:3). We are naturally children of wrath; however, eternal life can be ours if we trust in Jesus for salvation. Though we deserve alienation from God (Genesis 3:23-24), and though we should be punished for our sins (Romans 3:23), Jesus has provided a way of escape (John 5:24). When we trust in His work on our behalf, we are forgiven of our sins and given the hope of living forever with Him (Revelation 21:3-4).

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<sup>8</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 594.

<sup>9</sup> Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, 157.

<sup>10</sup> Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, 187.

<sup>11</sup> Akins, 124.

Seen in this way, eternal life is more robust than the average Christian imagines. It involves both a qualitatively and quantitatively better type of life. Eternal life is more than just living forever. It involves a level of living that is far superior to that which is experienced by most men and women. Eternal life is better than normal life in both time and type. It has promise of both a life that is full and a life that is forever. Do you have this type of life? If so, are you enjoying it and living according to its realities. Jesus lived, died, and defeated death to secure it on your behalf. Make sure you possess eternal life.

### **Verse 26**

John gets direct in verse 26. He explicitly expresses his concern regarding false teachers. He says, “I have written these things to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you” (1 John 2:26). Once again, the apostle gives a purpose statement to explain his reason for writing His letter. On multiple occasions, he gives a similar pronouncement (1:4; 2:1, 12, 13, and 14; and 5:13).

In this verse, he says that he was motivated to write because of people who were “trying to deceive.” The word translated “deceive” literally meant “to lead astray” or “to cause to wander.” Used figuratively in our text, it speaks of the act of misleading a person in a spiritual, moral, or intellectual sense.<sup>12</sup> The language carries the idea of “seducing” a person away from what is true.<sup>13</sup>

The original language of the text uses a present tense verb in a conative sense.<sup>14</sup> Thus, it carries the idea of one attempting or “trying to deceive” another.<sup>15</sup> The verbiage implies that the attempts at deceiving were unsuccessful.<sup>16</sup> The false teachers of Asia Minor were doing their best to mislead the true Christians. Over and over again, they taught their dubious doctrines, but most of the faithful were standing strong.

The apostle was disturbed because of the news he heard about heretics in the church. The gnostic emphasis on a newfound, secret knowledge was causing some to doubt their salvation (1 John 5:13). As a result, our current passage was intended to remind the true Christians of the special life they possessed (1 John 2:24-25) and of the special knowledge they already had through the presence of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:26).

Throughout his letter, John has expressed concern over the gnostic deception (1 John 1:8 and 3:7), and rightfully so. The Bible warns that the church age will be marked by an ever-increasing amount of false teaching (2 Timothy 3:13). Deception will grow and grow until Christ returns. Up until the end of time, Satan will work feverishly to mislead people from God’s truth (Revelation 20:10). It is for this reason that Jesus warned us to “watch out that no one deceives” us (Matthew 24:5).

John’s purpose statement in verse 26 has meaning for us. There are a lot of strange “Christian” teachings nowadays, just as there was in the first century. There are many teachers and leaders who, while wearing a Christian label, have teachings that can lead us astray. If we aren’t grounded in God’s Word, we can easily forget the plain path of salvation, get our eyes off of our identity in Christ, and buy into ideas that are not in alignment with Scripture. Movements abound that beckon us to make self our number one priority. There is a plethora of so-called Christian teachings that are little more than modern, American self-help teaching coated in a veneer of Scriptural vocabulary. There are numerous legalistic movements that beckon us to go beyond the bounds of God’s Word, enforcing “convictions” and “standards”

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<sup>12</sup> Gingrich and Danker, 160.

<sup>13</sup> Zodhiates, 1166.

<sup>14</sup> Robertson, 218.

<sup>15</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 595.

<sup>16</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 595.

for holiness that are unnecessary. In addition, there is another movement that places an unbalanced weight on the role of the Holy Spirit, making certain experiences a pre-requisite for salvation and godliness. The list could go on and on. False teaching abounds in the twenty first century. Like never before, God's people must be on guard that they they aren't let astray. They must regularly remember who they are in Christ (1 John 2:24-25), and they must learn to rely on the Holy Spirit for instruction and insight (1 John 2:26).

### **Verse 27**

John gives a grand remedy for false teaching in verse 27. The faithful in Asia Minor didn't need to listen to the heretics, because they had the Holy Spirit. The apostle explains, "As for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you don't need anyone to teach you. Instead, his anointing teaches you about all things and is true and is not a lie; just as it has taught you, remain in him" (1 John 2:27). The verse begins with the phrase "as for you." In the original language of the text, the pronoun "you" is emphatic by position.<sup>17</sup> John intends to contrast his readership from the ones were were trying to deceive them.

The true Christians were different than the gnostics because they had "received" and "anointing." The word translated "received" appears in the aorist tense; thus, it points to a definite experience in the past. John means to remind his readers of the life changing conversion they had experienced in Christ. When they heard the gospel, repented, and believed in Jesus, they inherited an "anointing." Such an experience brought a radical change.

The Greek for "anointing" is only used one other time in the New Testament. The only other appearance of the term is found just a few verses earlier in John's letter. In 2:20, the apostle said, "You have an anointing from the Holy One." What is this "anointing" of which John speaks? The word is one that was used literally in the ancient world to speak of something that spread upon the surface of another thing. It was commonly used in reference to ointments. In the Old Testament system, it was used in regard to the Holy Spirit to depict one being appointed or empowered for a special task (Exodus 29:7 and Daniel 9:26). In the New Testament, the word depicts the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers.<sup>18</sup>

John wanted his readers to remember that they still had the Spirit of Christ within them. The anointing, the apostle said, came "from Him." Who is the "Him" of whom John speaks? He is no other than Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes "from Him" because He is the one who promised the Spirit's appearing (John 16:7).

John uses the word "remains" to emphasize the abiding reality of the Holy Spirit. It is the same one he implemented back in verse 24. Appearing in the present tense in our current passage, the term depicts a continual act of remaining. In the face of false teachers who were sowing seeds of doubt, the real Christians needed to remember that they had the Spirit of God and that the Spirit would never leave them. Such truth was in alignment with the teaching of Jesus. While on Earth, our Lord promised His disciples, "I will not leave you as orphans" (John 14:18). Paul also testified to the permanence of the Holy Spirit's presence. In Ephesians 1:13, he said, "In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed. The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory." Once the Third Person of the Trinity inhabits a soul, He never leaves it. He makes the believer's heart a permanent abode until the end of time.

The believers in Asia Minor needed to hear this truth. False teachers were intimidating them. John sought to instill confidence in his readers by saying, "you don't need anyone to teach you." The apostle's words shouldn't been interpreted as meaning there isn't a need for teachers within the church. Indeed, some have been zealous for such a perspective and have

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<sup>17</sup> Akin, 125.

<sup>18</sup> Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, [CD-Rom].

separated themselves from local congregations on the basis of a flawed hermeneutic. Calvin remarks, “Absurdly, then, do fanatical men lay hold on this passage, in order to exclude from the church the use of the outward ministry” of teaching.<sup>19</sup>

We know that such a point of view is incorrect. John surely affirmed the importance of teaching. The very fact that he wrote an epistle containing so much instruction stands as evidence to this reality.<sup>20</sup> On top of this, Scripture clearly demonstrates that teaching has a place of prominence in the local church (Ephesians 4:11-12 and Romans 12:6-8).

The original language of the text contains a present tense verb. As a result, our verse could be translated as saying, “You don’t need anyone to keep on teaching you.”<sup>21</sup> John seems to be taking direct aim at the gnostic heretics. It is as if he is telling his readers, “You don’t need the false teachers to keep teaching you. You have a better teacher in the Holy Spirit!”

For John, the Spirit of God was a better teacher because He “teaches...about all things.” Teaching is a distinct function of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus prophesied concerning Pentecost, He explicitly referenced this aspect of the Spirit’s ministry. In John 15:26, He said, “When the Counselor comes, the one I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—he will testify about me.” On another occasion, He proclaimed, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13). Through the Third Person, believers have an ever-present guide by their side.

He gives them knowledge, as John says it, concerning “all things.” Obviously, the apostle’s words should not be interpreted as meaning the Holy Spirit can make us know anything about everything through some mystical transmission of data. We do not have a spiritual capacity to gain insight about physical and mechanical things apart from the normal studying that is required. A person may be born-again, but that does not mean he or she has superior smarts. The phrase “all things” should be thought of as referring to the spiritual, moral, and emotional realms of the human constitution. According to Scripture, the Spirit of God gives us “Everything required for life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3).

It is for this reason John could tell his readers, “you don’t need anyone to teach you.” Through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, they had “all things” they needed for following Christ. The Spirit would guide them, and He would guide them toward what was “true,” as opposed to what was “a lie.” John used the word translated “lie” in our current passage back in 2:21, saying, “No lie comes from the truth.” The false teachers dealt in falsehood. They were deceiving many people. John wanted his readers to know that they had the capacity to stand strong. The Spirit can lead God’s children to truth. In fact, it has been promised that He will do so. Jesus called the Third Person of the Trinity “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17).

If believers want to stand strong in the midst of deception, they only need to “remain in him.” Jesus “taught” the earliest disciples in this regard. By mentioning the Lord’s teaching, John is likely making a reference to the entire Farewell Discourse of John 13-17.<sup>22</sup> In reading that sermon, you will discover Jesus had a lot to say about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. One of his points focused on the act of remaining in Him. From Jesus’ final sermon, we read:

Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are

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<sup>19</sup> Calvin, 200.

<sup>20</sup> Akin, 125.

<sup>21</sup> Robertson, 218.

<sup>22</sup> Akin, 127.

burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you (John 15:4-7).

Staying in a close relationship with Jesus through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is the way to overcome the deception of a dark world.

Though they were originally intended for a first century audience in Asia Minor, John's words have important truth for us. Through the Holy Spirit, we have otherworldly insight for life. When life sends hardship and we don't know what to do, we can lean on Him. We aren't alone when we face challenging decisions. Emotions may harass us, but we have a helper. Throughout our entire pilgrimage on Earth, we have a guide by our side. The very Spirit that hovered over the surface of the waters at the beginning of time now hovers in our hearts (Genesis 1:2). When we face confusion, hardship, and a lack of direction, we can have assurance that the Spirit of God will guide us. We only need to lean on Him and abide in Christ!