

Alêtheia
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
August 29, 2021
“Doctrine”

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King's Kids.

NEWS

NO SUNDAY SERVICE HERE NEXT WEEK

Sheeran send off - pray for them - encourage them - support them - love them.
Wednesday Nights at Alêtheia begin soon - get ready - answer the survey...

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I John 2:18-27 ~

John says that it is the “Last hour,” and that the proof is that “Many antichrists have appeared.” The church age had begun and the way you knew that was because Satan was attacking the church with mini antichrists.

The church is where the _____ for one another manifests as unity.

Satan hates that. What Satan is determined to _____ is a lovingly united church.

This isn't about eschatological imminence - it's about divine immanence.
Not the nearness of God in _____, but the nearness of God in our reality.

God is near humanity through the Spirit led and Spirit unified _____.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

This is the most fundamental hindrance to church unity is corrupting the _____.
 The term antichrist, ἀντίχριστος (än-tē-χrēs-tōs) literally means against Christ...
 Anything that is against Christ can be ultimately against the _____.

Any religion that does not believe in the _____ described in the Bible cannot be Christian.

Ideas matter. There is a narrow path of _____ and there are ditches on either side.

One is the ditch of not being careful enough with the Truth (I Thessalonians 5:21&22, Romans 12:9, 14:1-23).

The other is the ditch of narrowminded rigidity (Luke 7:30).

- 1) Perfect doctrine is not a requirement for Salvation...
- 2) Constantly working for better doctrine is a sign of Salvation.
- 3) A person's doctrine as a whole, is never perfectly correct, but it is probably never perfectly incorrect either.

Verse 19 is about the foundation of the church. About ministers leaving the circle.

 Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

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1 John

Love one  another

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Last week we talked in general about the following verses, let's reread them and this time from a more readable version - this is from the NLT:

1 John 2:18–27 18Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the last hour has come. 19These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us. 20But you are not like that, for the Holy One has given you his Spirit, and all of you know the truth. 21So I am writing to you not because you don't

know the truth but because you know the difference between truth and lies. 22And who is a liar? Anyone who says that Jesus is not the Christ. Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist. 23Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father, either. But anyone who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. 24So you must remain faithful to what you have been taught from the beginning. If you do, you will remain in fellowship with the Son and with the Father. 25And in this fellowship we enjoy the eternal life he promised us. 26I am writing these things to warn you about those who want to lead you astray. 27But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don't need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know, and what he teaches is true—it is not a lie. So just as he has taught you, remain in fellowship with Christ.

One of the nice things about using the original text for our ongoing study is that it doesn't really matter which translation we read. In other words, I'm not basing this sermon off of the English words I just read, or the English words of the NASB, or the KJV, or any other translation for that matter. Like the guy said, "You have

not experienced Shakespeare until you have read him in the original Klingon.” This line pokes fun at the false propaganda of the former Soviet Union, but also at academics who often say that you must read great thinkers in the language in which they wrote. Descartes in Latin, Dostoevsky in Russian, Nietzsche in German, the New Testament in Greek. This is an important point that we will revisit later. Perhaps next week.



In verse 18, John says that it is the “Last hour,” and that the proof of that fact is that “Many antichrists have appeared.” The easy way to take his meaning is to attribute it to the doctrine of eschatological imminence,

meaning that the End can happen at any moment. It is an idea taught throughout Scripture by the Apostles and by Jesus Himself. Whatever you think about the Rapture, make no mistake, the Bible declares that the End, with the Return of Christ and the Final Judgment can happen today.

While that's true, it wasn't precisely what John was getting at here. His point was that humanity had entered into the final chapter - here the "Final hour." The church age, so to speak, had begun and the way you knew that it was true was because Satan was attacking the church with mini antichrists.

For us to understand these verses before us today we must remember the context. What has John been talking about? It has all been about the church and the love for each other we must have and for the unity that would result.

Satan hates that. We often think of an individual accepting Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior as the thing that angers Satan most. It's not true. Satan has little use for an individual person and so, little concern about what they personally do or don't do.

Satan probably doesn't know that you even exist, nor does he care. This idea that Satan is behind everything wrong in your life is nonsense driven by an erroneous dualism of Good versus Evil that elevates Satan and by our incredible autocentric self-focus.

Our problems are largely of our own making. That coupled with the problems others make for us and the fallen nature of the world with war, famine, crime, disease, and pestilence... What do we expect? Satan gets way too much credit, and we think way too highly of ourselves as being the center of the universe.

Maybe, if you're being used in some huge way to build the Kingdom and are a wonderful example of a Spirit-filled Child of God, maybe, you rate a low-ranking demon to torment you... Maybe, but then why? Such a Christian would absolutely know that "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4), and so, not be derailed.

What Satan despises, hates, loathes, and is determined to destroy is a lovingly united church. Lucifer has dedicated himself and his demon resources to fighting the church... Which is to fighting God's love

perfected through His children in this physical plane of existence. God's love physically touching people through people allowing such a flow. That's what drives the Devil to distraction.

For that love of God to be perfected in actual Truth it must be accomplished in our closest relationships first. If you cannot love your Believing spouse, any love for the church will be a lie. If you cannot love your local church family, any love for persecuted Christians will be a lie. If you cannot love persecuted Christians, any love for the lost will be a lie. You must love near, before you can love far.

Well, that love perfected is what Satan hates and so for him to send antichrists against the church it is proof that the church is on earth and that it is the "Last hour" for humanity.

That means that John here is not so much talking about imminence, but about immanence. Not the nearness of God in time, but the nearness of God in our reality. God is near humanity through the Spirit led and Spirit unified church. Christians bonded in His love building His Kingdom on earth. That's what "Salt and

Light” is all about - not individual Christians, but all of us united as the church universal made up of local church families.



That's what makes ole' Clubfoot insane with rage - that's what he's been warring against for 2,000 years. And sad to say, that's the war that he's mostly winning and mostly because we individual Christians make it so easy for him. A little whisper here, a little whisper there and the next thing you know we, who are supposed to be filled with God's love, are tearing each other apart. Dividing and separating, making it so easy for evil to pick us off one by one.

This is the most fundamental hindrance to church unity - here called antichrists. The term antichrist, ἀντίχριστος (än-tē-ḡrēs-tōs) literally means against Christ... Anything that is against Christ can reasonably be called antichrist.

As I mentioned last week, there are many terms, names and phrases used to describe people who corrupt the Truth.

Corrupting the Truth is the most fundamental hindrance to church unity because it is the most fundamental hindrance to Christianity itself. If Satan can get nearly 17 million people accepting Mormonism as Christianity, he has not only deceived a huge number of people, he's made true Christians refusing to fellowship with Mormons as Christians, seem mean and even evil. It's a double win - a double hindrance to church unity.

Some of you may recoil at my insinuation that Mormons aren't Christians. Well, let's be clear. Individual Mormons have a range of beliefs at odds with their church and so I cannot speak to every Mormon person individually, but what I can say is that

the Mormon doctrine is absolutely not Christian and that anyone holding firmly to the tenants of the Mormon faith is not saved.

I'd be happy to discuss it at length some time, but for now suffice it to say that any religion that does not believe in the Jesus described in the Bible cannot be Christian and that then adds to the mix Jehovah's Witness, Christian Science, Unitarian, and Universalism groups among others. "Can't we all just get along?" Yes, of course. We as Christians must treat all people with dignity and respect and we must love them enough to share our faith with them, but we cannot fellowship together as Christians with those who are not Christians.

Good manners are nice. Being polite is good. Diplomacy is maturity and avoiding unnecessary conflict is noble, but... But, my friends, but honesty about eternity is far more important. While it seems harsh to deny a Mormon, or a JW acceptance as a fellow Christian, it would be far harsher to pretend that their belief is Christian.



Ideas matter. There is a narrow path of Truth and there are ditches on either side. One ditch is the ditch of not being careful enough with the Truth. My pastor friends and I are always astounded when a person leaves church A for church B, when the doctrinal differences between the two churches are so vast. Does the person not know? Do they not care? Can a Christian discern the difference between a Biblical sermon and a motivational speech? Do we know the difference between the social gospel, the prosperity gospel, the hedonistic gospel, and the true Gospel?

Ideas matter. The Apostle Paul said in I Thessalonians 5:21&22, “Examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil,” and in Romans 12:9, “Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.”

So, we must take care and protect the Truth from error, and we must therefore examine things and come to a decision about them as Paul said in Romans chapter 14, “Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind,” because “Each one of us will give an account of himself to God.” Therefore, accept and do not judge the opinions of others, but be “Determined not to put a stumbling block in a brother’s way.”

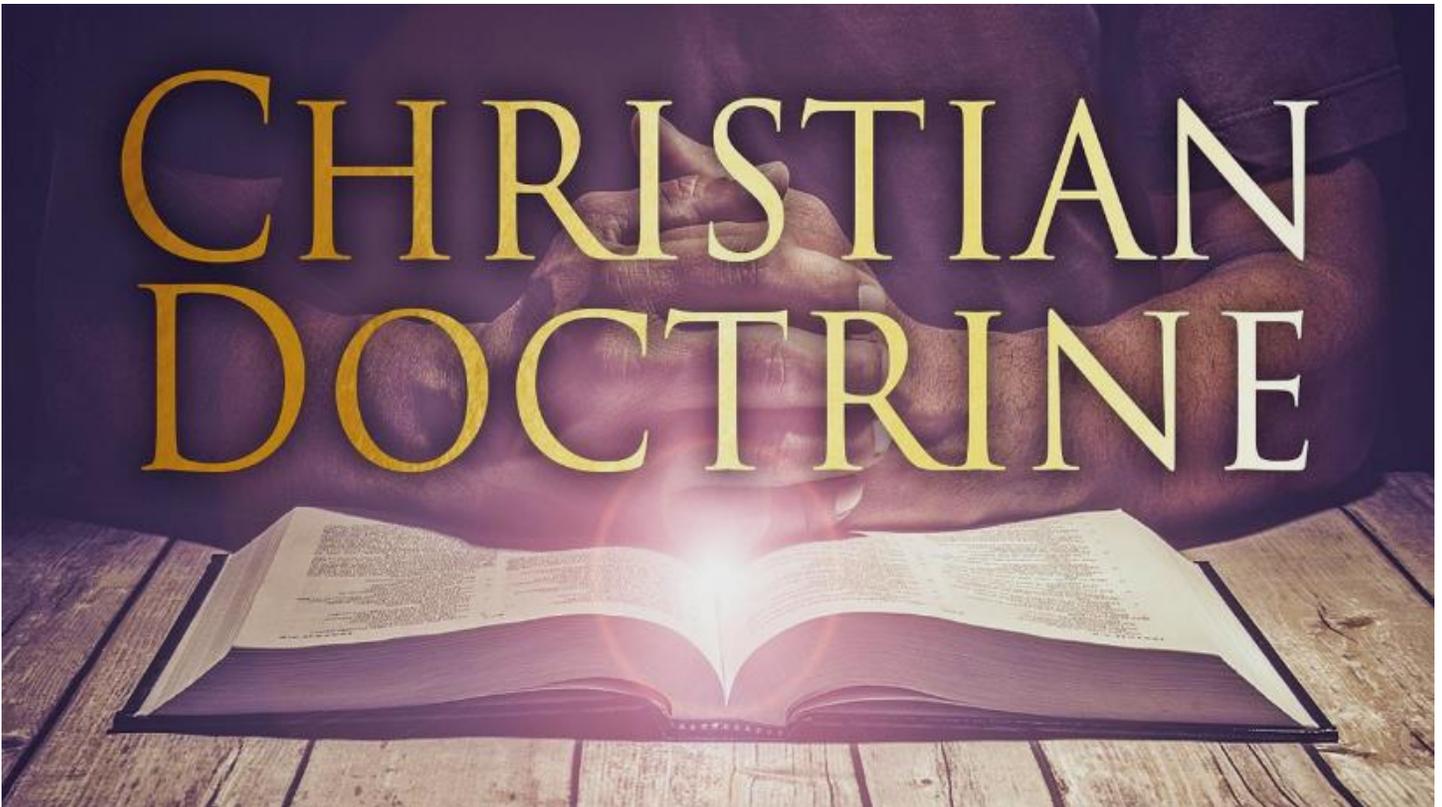
Ideas matter and so know what you believe and know why you believe it and then grant grace, love and understanding to those who disagree on the non-salvific issues. How do you know the difference between salvific and non-salvific issues? By learning what they are, by being ever humble, and by thinking of Christ’s desires, rather than your own desires. Honestly, the last one encompasses the first two.

The other ditch is being so narrowminded, rigid and opinionated that you drive everyone away and have

unity only with your clique, or cult, or with practically no one at all.

Like legalism, this is one of those things that if you are doing it, you can't see it in yourself. Anyone tending toward the other ditch can readily spot these exclusionists, but all the preaching in the world will not reach them. Personally, if I'm going to err, I want to err on the side of love and unity, not the side of hate and division. Both ditches are bad, but this is the ditch that gets people burned at the stake.

Remember, we're talking about you as a Christian who holds to the Truth for yourself and your ability to accept and so, fellowship with, other people claiming to be Christians. When I say stay in the middle of the path, but if you must favor a side, favor the side of acceptance, I don't mean acceptance of error in yourself, I mean accepting other people who have error.



That's accepting others with imperfect doctrine because all Christians, including you and I have imperfect doctrine. No Christian since Christ Himself has had perfect doctrine. That means a few things...

1) Perfect doctrine is obviously not a requirement to be Saved, or Heaven will be Jesus sitting at the head of a cosmically massive banquet table all alone. Thank God for His Grace. Since God grants Grace, perhaps we ought to consider it as well - just a thought.

2) While it is true that our doctrine, while wearing our earth-suits, will never be perfect, it can always be

better. As Christians we are to constantly strive to be better in all areas, even though perfection will elude us. Just because we will never love perfectly or have perfect self-control it by no means gives us a pass. We can never be satisfied, but must always strive ahead. Perfect doctrine isn't a requirement for Salvation, but constantly working for better doctrine is a sign of Salvation.

3) A person's doctrine as a whole, is never perfectly correct, but it is probably never perfectly incorrect either. It is always in error to some degree on a scale from wonderfully accurate to woefully inaccurate. That means we need to determine how wrong is too wrong for acceptance into Christian fellowship and also that anything right enough for acceptance, must fully be accepted.

Last week we said that a good starting point would be a creed such as the Apostle's Creed, or the Nicene Creed, or even the Athanasian Creed. We based that off of the Biblical Truth that only one thing matters - that being Jesus. Salvation is never Jesus plus something else, like Jesus plus confession, Jesus plus repentance, Jesus plus baptism, Jesus plus not

drinking coffee... It can only ever be Jesus and Jesus alone as the one thing that matters.

We also saw, that to accept Jesus truly, honestly, genuinely, there are other ideas that must also be accepted, and they matter precisely to the degree that they affect right belief about the One - about Jesus.



If someone meets the minimum standard they must be fully accepted. We cannot accept a person and treat them differently just because their faith is weak as the Apostle Paul put it. Accept them, not for the purposes of passing judgment on them - ridiculing them, being

dismissive of them, treating them as less. If that sounds familiar to you it should because I'm simply paraphrasing the Bible from Romans chapter 14.

Many Christians are conservative people, which by definition means that they don't like change - they don't like the unsettled feeling of chaos that comes from a lack of clearly defined parameters, boundaries, procedures, and rules. They prefer control over creativity, stability over innovation, and constancy over renewal. When they have that order, they flourish and are dramatically better than liberals at working within the system and making the system function efficiently.

Liberals are liberals because they are never satisfied with the status quo. They may be loosey-goosey, and a bit crazy, but they are the creative pioneering types who are always looking to build a better mousetrap. Conservative people are happy with the trap they have. It works, they know how to operate it well, and they don't fix what isn't broken. Liberals think that's ridiculous, so instead of working to keep the existing mouse trap working as advertised, they're off in dreamland thinking of another way to catch a mouse.

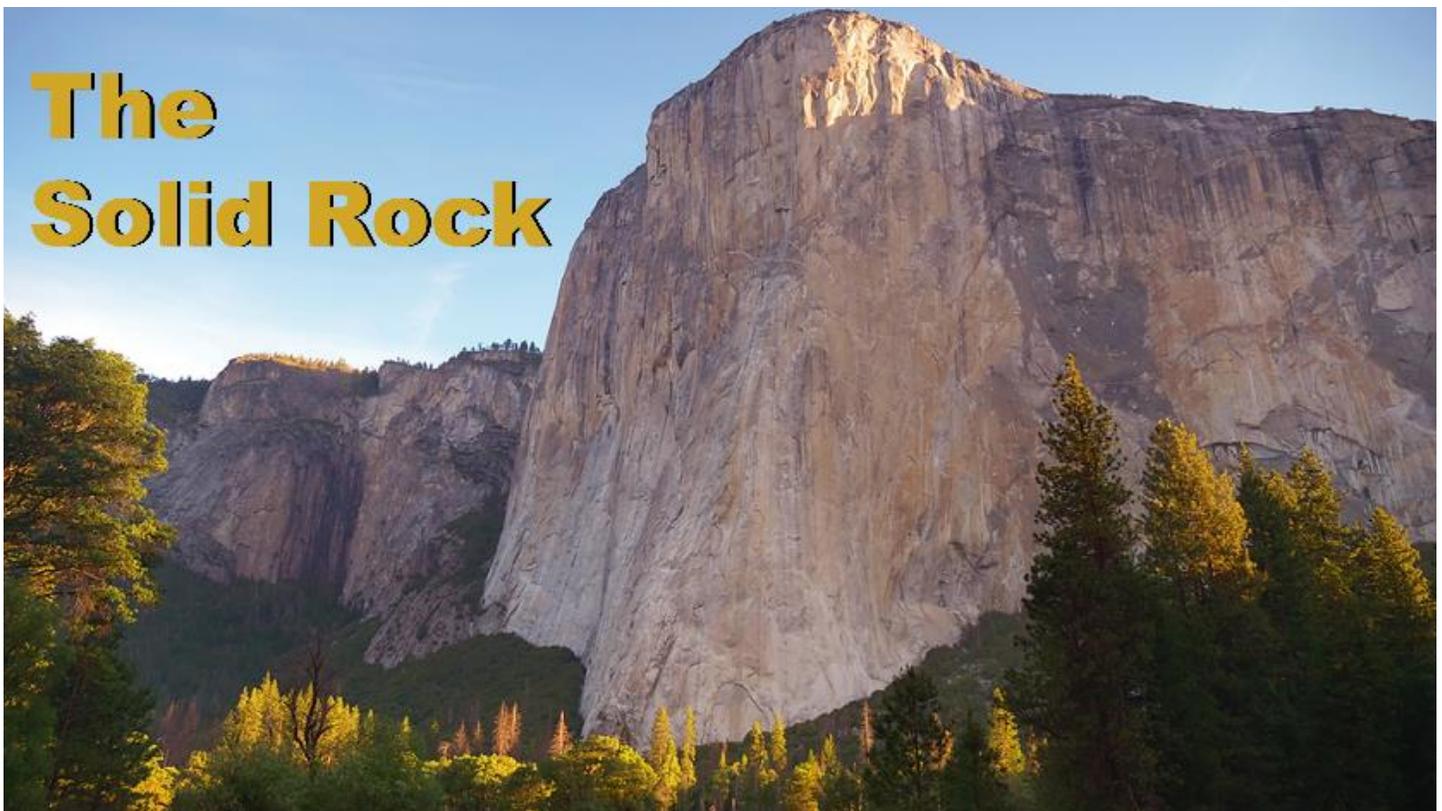
Creative liberal progressive types are entrepreneurs and the people finding new ways to do work.

Conservative people are CEO's and the people making actually doing the work. You need both in a dynamic and changing environment. Liberals need to keep thinking of new things and Conservatives need to rein them in and only implement the ideas that are actually better. We need each other.

If nothing ever changed, the conservatives would be right, but everything except the Gospel does change. If not for liberals, you would all be illiterate, and I would preach to you in Greek from the Greek Bible (sort of the same). And we would all be singing psalms to the strumming of harps and lyres.

The core Message must remain inviolate, but all the rest is somewhat negotiable, and it needs to be so in order not to have tyranny. Only accepting people who believe exactly as you do, has been tried many times... They are trying it again in Afghanistan right now. It how they run things in North Korea and China. It's how they did it in Nazi Germany and in the Soviet Union. I guess the church could do the same.

So, once we agree on the core Gospel and therefore are in full fellowship, we all continue to grow in our faith as we grow in our knowledge of the Truth and our doctrine gets better together as a family. You don't need to worry about the poor doctrine of the person on the other side of the church - that's my concern, not yours. If you can gently encourage someone to better thinking when they ask for your wisdom, by all means. Otherwise, "Work out your own salvation."



So, the last hour simply means the age, time, or era of the Body of Christ on earth. Verse 19 is about the foundation of the church. It is not, contrary to popular

opinion, referring to people church hopping. It does not mean a person who fellowshiped in church A for a season and then moved on to church B. That's a different issue entirely, often very bad, but not addressed here. Not addressed here primarily because it wasn't an issue then. In the first century, you generally only had one option for a church community.



Verse 19 is about ministers leaving the circle of ministers like John. The “Us,” that John uses 5 times in this single verse, is once again John and his fellow Apostles. That’s the “Us” grammatically speaking, not the us as in us sitting here right now.

Strictly speaking it is the 11 Apostles, but can rightly be extrapolated to the other foundational teachers of Christianity. Obviously, the Apostle Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and Apollos to name a few. At the same time there were also many who began teaching a false Christianity like Hymenaeus, Alexander, Hermogenes, Philetus and Demas. Every one of the false teachers separated themselves from the true teachers.

That is the nature of it, and it has continued in that way for 2,000 years. Always there is a circle of stable, orthodox, Biblical Christian ministers, teachers, leaders, scholars, pastors, who are subject to each other.

One of the primary purposes of my eclectic pastor group is to keep each other in check. Do you know that every one of them has listened to me preach? I have listened to every one of them preach. We have had hundreds of hours of discussion, study, and prayer together concerning theology and doctrine. One of our purposes is to ensure that we all stay true to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

False ministers never do that. They are outside of the circle because they cannot stand the scrutiny of the circle. They are doing their own thing and people think that makes them true, which is the opposite of the Truth.

They dupe people with their charisma and manipulative personas. They are false and every stable, orthodox, Biblical Christian minister will tell you that they are outside of the circle.

The false teachers back then, as now, seemed to know what they were talking about, but once confronted by Apostles and their approved disciples the false teachers either corrected their doctrine and remained or they separated away from the Apostolic group of teachers.

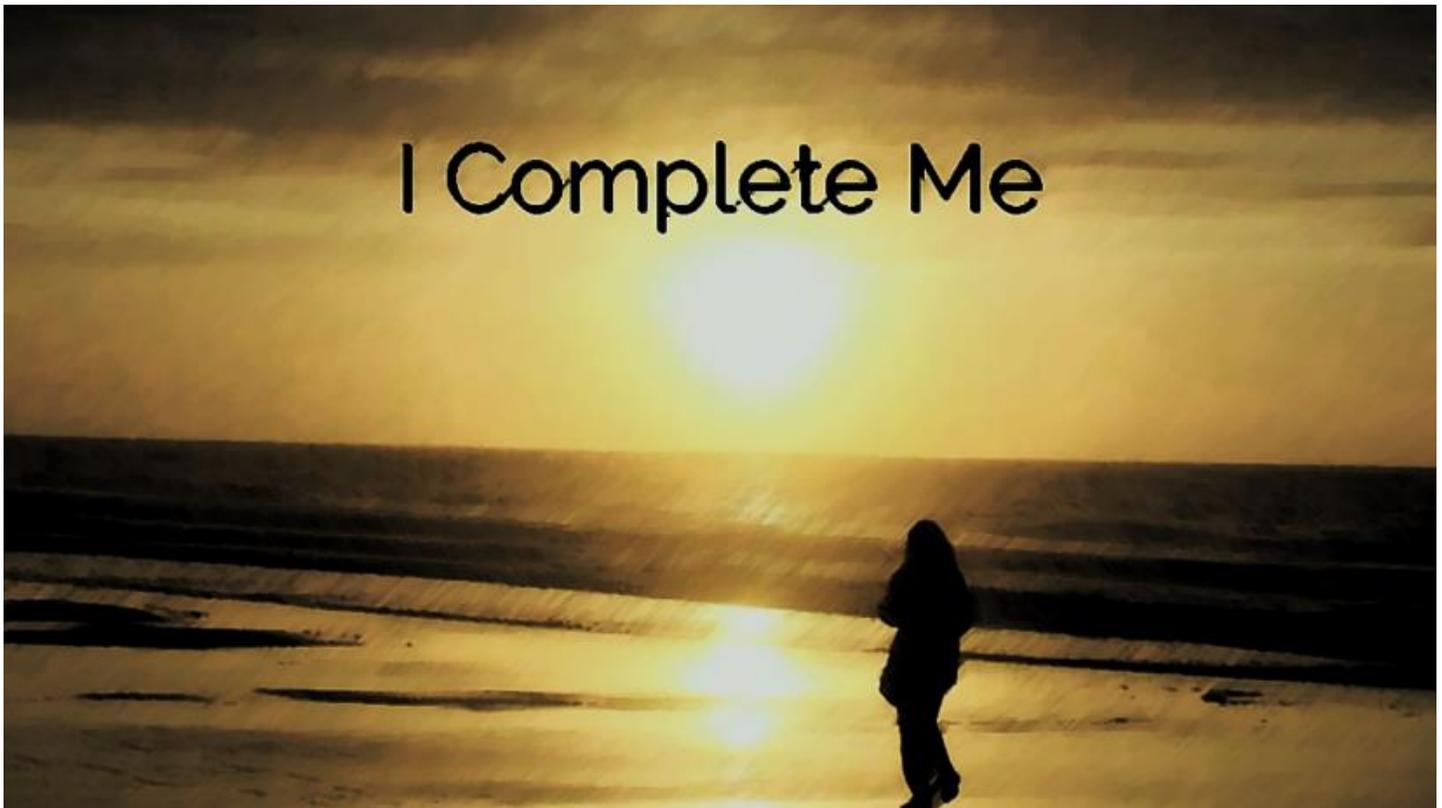
God drove them away to show that they were false by allowing their divisive nature to take its course.

It is rarely necessary to remove an antichrist from your church or your life... If you keep living and speaking the Truth the antichrist will generally remove themselves.

Who are the antichrists today? They are teachers who will not associate with and so be in fellowship with the wider Body of Christ. They go out from the group teaching good enough doctrine and either go it alone or align themselves with others of their antichrist ilk and teach their, not good enough, doctrine. As an example, Joseph Smith the founder of Mormonism was a lone wolf who duped many with humanistic theology, like you will one day be a god. And with feel good false doctrines, like you can get baptized on behalf of a dead non-believer. And with sanctioned sexual deviancy, like you can have multiple wives without concern for the age difference. My great-great grandfather John Scott was 57 when he added his 5th wife to the family. She was 17.

God drives them away by letting their divergent nature drive them. That is how He shows us that they are false. Find out who a Bible teacher or pastor is accepted by, or who they associate with... If they are out there doing their own thing with no oversight, or association with other legitimate Christian teachers and leaders, you really need to be cautious. There's a

reason their lone wolfing it, and it isn't because they're the only ones with the Truth, that, I promise you.



We'll investigate these verses a bit more next time, but I want to quickly touch on verse 20, which is similar to verse 27 before we finish. People get the insane idea that they don't need no stinkin' Bible teacher or pastor at all - they have the Holy Spirit and so they know everything they need to know... Which is proof positive that they don't.

Who has received from the Holy Spirit sound doctrine without any study? Please show me the person who

had no Christian instruction at all, and who had never before opened a Bible, listened to a sermon, read a book about Christianity, watched a Christian movie... Show me anyone who knew nothing and then was overtaken by the Holy Spirit and was supernaturally given sound doctrine. Show me one person in the history of the world. That's nonsense. That's not how God operates.

The Holy Spirit does in fact teach us all, but He does it through the teaching of the Apostles and pastors of the first century, now recorded as Holy Spirit inspired doctrine in what we call the New Testament.



God the Spirit has chosen to teach all things through tangible means - through the tangible Bible and through His ministers of that content. God will not teach you true doctrine by osmosis - you must work hard to learn, and you must learn from teachers. That has always been the mechanism.

You might object and say I don't need a teacher; I can learn on my own - I can self-study. Never, never in a million years. How can you read? How can you get the Greek New Testament in English? How can you understand concepts and relationships and context and meaning properly? It is a lie to think that a person does

anything in a vacuum. We all benefit every day on the work of others.

What John was saying was that his Christian children, so to speak, had already been taught the Truth and had accepted it and had been transformed by it. John reassured them that the Gospel they knew was the True Gospel and all they needed to know for salvation as the Holy Spirit had confirmed that fact within them. They had no need for a different Gospel.

Foundational belief, not the details of doctrine, was the issue and John's point was they had already embraced that and were therefore saved.



Verse 20 says, “And you all know,” not that “You know all.” John then goes on for several verses confirming that it is what they were taught by him and his associates that they all knew. Further that if they abided in that teaching, they had from the beginning of their Christian life they would continue in that life.