

The Word Abiding in You — October 6, 2024

1 John 2: Fathers, Young Men, Little Children; Love Not the World; The Anointing; and the Omniscient Savior of Psalm 139

Scripture Reading: 1 John 2:12–27; Colossians 1:9–11; Psalm 139:1–18; Romans 12:1

“I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” (1 John 2:14)

“O how precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!” (Psalm 139:17)

The Three Stages of Growth: Forgiveness, Knowledge, and Overcoming

First John 2:12–17 addresses the whole family of faith in three stages. John opens by writing to the whole household: children — that is, all believers — because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake. That is the common ground on which every member of God’s family stands. Then he differentiates. To the fathers, twice, he says the same thing: because ye have known him that is from the beginning. The repetition is not accidental. When a believer has grown to full maturity, there is nothing more to add; what characterizes the father is the deep and settled knowledge of Christ himself — the one who was with the Father from eternity, who came in flesh, who is now seated in the heavenlies. That knowledge exhausts what can be said.

To the young men he says two things. First: because ye have overcome the wicked one. Then, the second time, more fully: because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. The connection is made explicit: the strength that overcomes the wicked one is the word of God abiding in you. Not the word of God memorized as a reference library, consulted when needed. But abiding — dwelling, remaining, making its home in the heart. When the Lord Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, he did not search his memory for the appropriate verse. The answer was there. It sprang from what was within. That is the word of God abiding. It is the work of the Spirit of God in the heart, and it cannot be reduced to a technique.

To the little children: because ye have known the Father. A child knows its father before it knows much of anything else. That early, simple, personal knowledge of God as Father is the beginning of the life. It protects in one sense — the child knows to whom to go — but it does not yet provide the strength to overcome the wicked one. That comes with growth, with the word abiding, with the young man's stage.

Love Not the World: The Three Instruments of the Enemy

Verse 15 gives the direct command: love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. The world here is not the universe or the physical creation; it is the organized world system that Cain built — the system of things by which man lives apart from God and does not need to think about God. The world rejected Christ. It crucified him. To love the world is to love what crucified him. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

And the instrument by which the enemy manages the world system is threefold: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These are not the problems of youth only. The old nature is the same old nature at every age, and it has the same susceptibilities at sixty that it had at twenty. These three instruments

were what Satan used against Eve in the garden, and they are what he used against the Lord Jesus in the wilderness. He that overcometh — the young men's word — overcomes by the word of God abiding, because the word of God is what meets each of those three instruments.

The Anointing: Knowing Without Being Taught by Man

Verses 20 and 27 introduce the anointing — the same word as unction — which every believer has received from the Holy One. Ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. This is not a claim of individual infallibility or a dismissal of the gift of teaching. It is an affirmation that the Holy Spirit, indwelling every believer, is the teacher of the things of God, and that no external authority can replace him. False teaching works by interposing a system, a tradition, a hierarchy between the believer and the word of God. The anointing is the direct work of the Spirit on the heart to give the sense of what is true.

This matters in a day when there are many antichrists: those who deny the Father and the Son, who deny that Jesus is the Christ, who deny Jesus Christ come in flesh. The test is not complex: every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God; every spirit that does not is not of God and is the spirit of Antichrist. The antichrist is not only the final one to come; there are already many, and they seduce by a subtle but decisive move away from the person of Christ himself. The anointing protects.

Strengthened unto Patience: Colossians 1

Colossians 1:9–11 holds a surprise for those who equate divine power with outward display. Paul prays that the Colossians might be strengthened with all might according to his glorious power. One might expect the purpose to be: for a

display of power. Instead: unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. God's glorious power in the believer is most clearly seen not in spectacular gifts but in patience — the patient endurance of circumstance, the longsuffering with one another, the waiting on God rather than acting in the flesh. The patience of Christ himself is the pattern: he waits patiently for the Father's time, when the word will be given to call his bride home. That kind of patience is where true divine power is displayed.

Psalm 139: The Omniscient Savior

Psalm 139 is one of the great doxologies of divine omniscience. Jehovah, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. There is not a word in my tongue but thou knowest it altogether. To the natural man, this is a disturbing thought. He instinctively knows his conscience is not clean, and the thought that God sees everything produces the same reaction as Adam in the garden: hiding. But that is not what this psalm communicates.

The tone of Psalm 139 is wonder and gratitude. David is not hiding; he is marveling. O how precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! When I awake, I am still with thee. The question the psalm implicitly asks is: would you want any other kind of Savior? A Savior who discovered something when he came to sign the transaction, something he had not noticed before, who said — wait, I can't do this? Or a Savior who knew every sin, every thought, every hidden thing, who knew me when I was unformed substance in the womb, and died for me anyway? The omniscience of God is not a threat to the believer. It is the guarantee that the love that found us and saved us was not operating with incomplete information. He knew everything. He still came. He still died. How that ought to affect every area of conduct and service — not to put on airs before a God who sees everything, but to love the one who, seeing everything, loved anyway.

Romans 12:1 draws out the response: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassions of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service. Under the Old Testament law, the sacrifice was dead — its life spent, no longer able to function in the world. The new covenant asks for a living sacrifice: one who is dead to self and to self's claims in this world, but alive and functioning entirely for God. To live for myself as a believer is unintelligent — it is what the verse calls exactly that, by contrast: this is your intelligent service. The intelligent response to the omniscient Savior who gave himself for me is to give myself for him.

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