

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

1 JOHN 2:18-27

In this lesson, we'll see that the Apostle John was concerned about the spiritual growth and development of the folks to whom he is writing this letter. He was concerned that these folks would fall away from the truth...that they would not know enough sound doctrine and would be led astray. This was a real concern of all the early church leaders...Peter addressed this problem, as did Paul and Jude.

1 John 2:18...

Many things have been written and reported about the end of the old millennium and the beginning of the new millennium. Folks wonder what the new millennium will bring.

Those of us who are past middle age (whatever that age is) know we won't live even half way into the next century...so if whatever is supposed to happen doesn't happen pretty soon, we'll be gone on to heaven by the time it happens, won't we?

Are we living in the last days? Well, John says in 2:18:

"Children, it is the last hour..." (and he says it twice!) and if it was the "last hour" in **John's** day, how much more is it the last hour in **our** day!

The Word of God tells us that toward the close of the age, there will be a time of increased sin, difficulty and turmoil.

Paul told Timothy that "in the last days, perilous times would come."
Paul also told Timothy that "in the latter times, some shall depart from the faith."

In other words, some who profess to belong to Jesus will turn and go away. Jesus said there would be in those days

wheat, which represents the genuine and true
and tares, which represents the imitation and false.

In today's lesson, John draws a sharp contrast between the false believer and the true believer. In **verse 19**, notice how many times "**they**" and "**us**" are mentioned.

John is talking about those who go away and those who remain.

Three crucial things are said about those who go away...

1) They deny the Christ...

Verses 22-23 tell us that those who go away deny the Christ. And in **verse 18**, we see two entities...the Antichrist (singular) and antichrists (plural).

A. The Antichrist

One day there will arrive on the scene the Antichrist. This man will be accepted and loved. Jesus said, "I have come in My Father's name, and you received Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive."

When Jesus came into the world, the devil offered Jesus all the kingdoms of this world if Jesus would only fall down and worship him. Jesus refused.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Jesus said, "Depart from Me, Satan."

But in the last days, the devil will make the same offer to a man. That man will take the devil up on his offer and the devil will deliver to this evil man all the kingdoms of this world. This man we call the Antichrist will represent the devil upon the earth.

B. Antichrists

In the meantime, many antichrists will come upon the scene. They were in existence in John's day and there are antichrists in our world today.

1 John 4:1-3...

1 John 4:1 tells us to test the spirits to see if they are from God.

Why do we need to do this? Well, Beloved, antichrists don't run around carrying big banners and wearing teeshirts that say "I'm your local present day antichrist. I'm against everything Jesus is for." If they did that we would know to stay away from them, wouldn't we?

These antichrists are human teachers who are teaching against the Lord Jesus Christ. The prefix "anti" means "against" and it also means "in place of". In the case of **the Antichrist**...he will set himself up to be worshipped instead of and in place of the Lord Jesus. In the case of these antichrists, they are opposed to the Lord Jesus.

But, they don't appear to be at first. They appear to be true believers and they appear to teach truth!

The key to whether a doctrine is really Christian doctrine, based on the truth of the Word of God is this: What does that doctrine teach about Jesus?

What does that doctrine teach about salvation?

If it denies the **virgin birth**, if it denies the **deity of the Lord Jesus**, if it denies that **Christ shed His blood on the Cross for the atonement for the sins of the world**...if it denies **Christ's bodily resurrection**...if it denies the Second Coming...then that doctrine and the teacher of that doctrine is **antichrist in nature**.

So, characteristic number 1 of those who go away is that they deny Christ...but also

2) They desert the Church...

Verse 19...and this desertion can take at least three forms...

A. Physical Desertion

These were once affiliated with a church yet they don't come anymore.

Now, I don't believe everyone who falls into this category of once being active in a church and not coming anymore is an antichrist.

I believe there are some folks who used to come to church and somebody hurt their feelings...or something happened and they got out of the habit...or their health keeps them home.

But, I believe this as well...these folks whose health is okay and allows them to be in church and aren't coming because someone hurt their feelings need to grow up...they need to realize as Bill

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

always says, "We're not in heaven yet." And there will always be folks who will upset us. But, God has called us to forgiveness and harmony and peace.

Having said that...you and I all know folks who looked like believers, talked like believers, maybe even preached or taught or sang like believers and yet "they went out from us because they were not really of us."

2 Peter 2:22...

"But it has happened to them according to the true proverb, 'A dog returns to its own vomit,' and 'A sow, after washing returns to wallowing in the mire.'"

Do you get the picture?

We won't deal with the dog, although all of us who have ever owned a dog know exactly what is pictured here...

But, let's think about the hog...

We have some neighbors in Arkansas. They bought a little pig and Connie, the mother of this household fell in love with this little pig...she named him "Oink." Connie kept this little pig in the house...in the living room. She fed Oink just like she did her dogs...she gave Oink his own little pillow. And Oink was almost like one of the family.

But Oink grew up to be a hog. He grew to be about 200 pounds and there came a day when Oink couldn't be a housepet anymore, because Oink would come into the house and throw the dogs around and he would bruise Connie's legs just trying to play like he did when he was a little pig. As hard as Connie tried, Oink wasn't a dog...he was a hog.

A hog is just a hog and you will never ever make anything out of it but a hog. You can bathe a hog, powder a hog, put a hog in the living room, put a red ribbon around its neck, and it can be the cleanest, prettiest hog you ever saw...but give it an opportunity and it will head for the hog pen and jump right into the mud hole.

Why? Because it was a hog all along!

And these folks who come to church and look like believers and act like believers but who are really against the Lord Jesus Christ will one day physically leave the church...and I know we could all name folks who have done this...

Not only is there physical desertion, but there is also

B. Moral Desertion

Some folks lead their lives totally apart from the discipline of the church of God and their life becomes a total contradiction to all the church of the Lord Jesus Christ stands for.

Folks may have their name on a church roll, but if they don't stand for purity and righteousness then they are standing for impurity and unrighteousness and chances are these folks are really antichrists!

In other words, if they act righteous and pure inside the church and another way outside the church...then **they have morally deserted the church** even though they may still attend the church.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

C. Intellectual Desertion

The Bible talks about folks who fall into apostasy. They profess to know the Lord. They profess to believe the essentials of the faith and even appear to live by them for a time.

But, one day they just flat out deny the fundamentals of the faith. They turn away from the truth of God's Word...**yet they remain in the church!**

The dangerous thing about these folks is that they often are promoted to places of importance.

They get into pulpits and then they deny the essential truth of the Word of God right there behind that sacred desk.

They invade our seminaries and they teach our young preacher boys that the Scripture isn't really the inspired, inerrant, infallible God-breathed Word of God (Thank heaven, we don't have that at our seminary...)

They get into denominational leadership and attempt to lead denominations away from the fundamentals of the very faith upon these denominations were founded.

They get on television and teach heresy while carrying a Bible and using the name of our dear Lord Jesus Christ...

God takes this very seriously, folks. Jesus said that it would be better for a man if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than to cause one of His little ones to stumble.

Some preachers who profess to know the Lord and yet deny the essential doctrines of the Christian faith need to have an old-fashioned experience of grace...

Dr. Harry Ironside tells this story in one of his books. He says there was a man who at one time preached the doctrines of the Christian faith and then began to doubt them. He began to preach only a social gospel. One night this preacher was getting ready to go to bed when a knock came on his door. At the door was a little girl, not dressed very well, obviously from the wrong side of the tracks. She said to this preacher, "I wonder if you could come down to my house. My mama is terribly sick."

The preacher said, "If your mama is drunk, call the police and let them come get her."

The little girl replied, "My Mama's not drunk. She is dying and she told me to get a preacher."

The man thought to himself, "I cannot go to that kind of neighborhood. What would happen to my reputation if I went there?" So he said, "Get the rescue mission man and let him go down there. I cannot go."

The little girl persisted, "But my mama said to get a real preacher and you're the only real preacher I know. Would you please come see my mama?" So he put his clothes on and made his way down to the place where the mother was dying.

She said to him, "O preacher, I'm dying. Can you tell me something about God? Can you tell me how to get to heaven?"

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

He began to think, "I have been preaching **salvation by character** but she does not have any. I cannot tell her that. I have been preaching **salvation by reformation** but there is no time for her to reform. I have been preaching **salvation by culture** but she does not have any time to acquire culture. What am I going to tell her?" He began to think of some of the verses his mother had taught him when he was a boy, so he quoted **John 3:16** to her.

She said, "Oh, sir, do you mean God loved the world and God loves even me?"

And he said, "Well, I guess that's right." Next he quoted to her another verse he'd learned from his mother...how the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin and she said, "Oh, sir, do you mean that Christ's blood will cleanse me from every sin I have ever committed?"

And he said, "Well, yes, I guess that's right, too." And he thought of another verse his mother had told him when he was a boy: "Whosoever will, let him come."

And she said, "Oh, sir, does that mean that even I could come and be saved?"

And he said, "Yes, it does." You know what that preacher said? He said that night she got saved and, praise God, he got saved, too!

That's what we need...we need to meet Jesus. No truly born-again believer will ever deviate very far from the essential doctrines of the Christian faith.

Not only do these antichrists **deny** the Christ and **desert** the Church,

3) They Deceive the Christian

and they attempt to do this in two ways...

Verse 26...

A. Confuse the Christian

These folks prey on young Christians and they confuse them because these young Christians are not grounded in the Word of God.

The cults make their doctrine so appealing. They send out signals that sound so **good** and **right** and **holy**, and if Christians aren't grounded solidly in the Word of God, they will be confused and they will fall for their false doctrine.

However, these folks don't want to simply **confuse the Christian**, their desire is to

2) Convert the Christian

Now, we all know that once we are truly God's child, no one can ever pluck us out of His hand...but those who have gone out from us because they were not of us don't believe this at all! They don't believe we are kept by the strong hand of Almighty God!

They believe we can be pulled from God's hand, so they come at new believers in order to convert them.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

And let me just say this about the major cults of this country...Many of their new converts come from the Baptist church, as well as the Methodist and the Presbyterian churches. They come after folks who may have grown up in the church but have not yet truly been saved and they also come after folks who are saved but don't know sound doctrine and who are led astray. If they're truly saved, they won't lose their salvation, and the Holy Spirit will continue to deal with them and remind them of Truth, but in the meantime, they lose their **joy** and their **witness** and their **assurance** and their **peace** and sometimes they lose their **families**.

I know that some of you have faced this very problem within you own family. So, what are we going to do to keep the antichrists from coming against our children and grandchildren?

- 1) **Tell them to stay in the Word.** Jesus said **"Thy Word is Truth."** How will they know what is false if they don't know the truth? God has given us His Truth and we are without excuse!!
- 2) **Tell them to stay in the church.** Tell them to find a church where they're fed sound doctrine...not where the preacher gives book reviews or rehashes social issues, but where he preaches solid truth from God's Word Sunday after Sunday.
- 3) **Tell them to stay in the Spirit. 2:20 and 27...**

Does this mean we don't need teachers? No, but it does mean you have a "Teacher in residence." You have the dear Holy Spirit who will enlighten you and assure you and teach you and guide you into all Truth.

"His anointing teaches you about all things..."

I believe this means that when the Spirit of God is in your heart and you are yielded to Him and you're quiet and listen to what He says, that He will lead you into all truth. Haven't you ever had a check in your spirit when you heard someone say a particular thing? **That check in your spirit is the Holy Spirit within you giving you the ability to detect error.**

I also believe this also means that although it's great to be taught by a dynamic Bible teacher such as a Kay Arthur or a Beth Moore, and it's wonderful and blessed to sit under a pastor like ours who expounds the Word to us verse by verse...as wonderful as that is...we ought to get to the place where the Spirit of God is our Teacher.

We need to grow up and graduate from milk to meat, and from being spoon fed to feeding ourselves.

Let me ask you...when you study God's Word, do you ask the Spirit of God to teach you and lead you?

Let me just give you a little clue...as you're reading God's Word, if you don't get the point the first time...get down on your knees and say,

"Lord, I miss the point. I don't understand this. Please make it real to me. I want Your Word to be real to me."

And I promise you...**He will make it real to you.** I'm convinced that no child of God who is desiring to learn and follow **the will and way and Word** of God will ever be led astray by any antichrist.

Jesus said, **"My sheep hear MY voice."** *John 10:27*

Let me just say one other thing...

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Don't take the word of everyone who calls himself or herself a teacher. Test every teacher you hear...test the things I say. Ask the Holy Spirit...

"Am I teaching the truth of God? Make it real to my heart, too. I want to know for myself whether it is true or not."

I **want** you to check me out...and I believe the pastor would say the same thing.

Paul told us in **2 Corinthians** to examine ourselves to see if we're in the faith.

I'd like to exhort you to do that this week. And if, after your examination you find that you pass...that indeed you are God's child...let me encourage you to examine your walk with the Lord.

Do you spend time with God every day?
Do you read His love letter to you every day?
Do you get quiet so you can hear what He's saying to you?

My prayer is that we will seek to walk a better Christian walk during the years God allows us to live in the new millennium than we've ever walked before. We're not getting any younger, folks.

If you've always intended to learn more of God's Word... when do you plan on starting?

If you've always intended to witness more...to share your faith more... when do you plan on starting?

If you've always intended to come along side someone and disciple them or even ask someone to come along side you and disciple you... when do you plan on starting?

Why not start now? Let's start this week...even before January 1. I'll encourage you and hold you accountable...and you encourage me and hold me accountable! Let's be what God wants us to be!

My prayer is that we won't fall for any false teaching...that we will be so grounded in the Word of God that when we hear false teaching, there will be a red flag...and a check in our spirit the very minute we hear anything that is antichrist!