

1 John

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1 John 2:19-21

Vs. 19

- Generally church people get uptight when they hear that So-and-So has left the church. Here, John is saying that not only is he happy these people have left, but he would have been happy to help them pack and then drive them! My own experience has seen God “prune” congregations where He cut out many dead and unproductive branches, while perhaps painful, had to be done before the congregation could grow and thrive. In some cases, there are people who simply do not want to see *THEIR* church change or grow. “Come wail or woe, our status is quo!” “This church is here for us four and no more!” These folks simply have a pronoun problem. Too many possessive pronouns like MY and OUR as if the church belonged to them and not to God. It doesn’t matter if your grandfather gave the money for the stained-glass window. It was a gift to God and the window belongs to God, not you or your family.
- In other situations, which is the case here with John and his churches, there are times when people bring in some squirrely ideas about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the church. Here some pruning needs to be done to eliminate some alien vines that can choke out the healthy vine. Sometimes it’s issues on church polity, how the church should be run and those discussions usually begin with someone saying, “Well I think...”. Never underestimate the truly silly ways church conflicts can start. But there are also those times when radical alien theology is the problem. We’ve seen this with unbiblical attitudes toward the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And we are seeing it now in churches across the country as they deal with a 21st Century version of the Gnosticism John dealt with in the 1st Century. Then as now, people come into churches teaching a “new” truth, telling people how they need to allow their thinking to evolve on this issue or that, in order to keep up with the times, stay in step

with the culture, and give the church the opportunity to reach new people! Well, who isn't for reaching new people? It's great, right up until the church of Christ's lambs realizes it has just opened the door to a pack of hungry wolves.

- In this verse, the false teachers have left and by so doing show that they did not truly belong to the church of Jesus Christ in the first place. It doesn't matter if they were nice, if they were "good people", they were aliens, they were never really part of us. Simply because one has joined a church, it does not mean they have joined Jesus. A.E. Brooke puts it, "External membership is no proof of internal union." This concept runs throughout the New Testament. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says in Matthew 7:15-23 to beware of the false prophets who come to us in sheep's clothing. They look like us and talk like us, but they are not us. Indeed, they are here to destroy to achieve their own purposes. Paul says in Romans 9:6b, "For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel."

Vs. 20

- The sales pitch of the Gnostics, both in John's time and in ours, is that they have a new knowledge, a new understanding, a new wisdom that was not known before. John wants them to know that Christ has already given them 100% of all they need to know to live the life He has called them to live.
- "But you have an *anointing* from the Holy One...": The King James uses the word "unction". Either way, people today have no idea what this means. Typically, an anointing involves oil poured or applied by touch to someone's head. Unction primarily refers to applying a salve, usually to the eyes. So we have been touched by Christ and our eyes have been opened to see what reality truly is, to see what Truth is. We have had our eyes opened by Christ so that we will know what is real, true, and genuine and so we can spot a forgery instantly when we see it.
- The effect of this unction, as Matthew Henry puts it, is that it enlightens and it strengthens our understanding and pulls us closer to Christ, making us more like Christ. "...and you all know."

Vs. 21

- The key point here is that John is not writing to correct the church or to fuss at them as Paul did to the Galatians. John is writing to affirm them and support them. They did right by not embracing the heresy of the Gnostics and they did right by letting them leave and not going with them. They did right by understanding something the church in our day should heed: that it is better to be with the few who are faithful, than with the many who chase after lies (Matthew 7:13-14).
- This is the same thought Paul gives in 1 Thessalonians 4:9, "... you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another." God has already taught you, Paul is saying, there is nothing else anyone can teach you.
- William Barclay: "What we need is not new truth, but the truth which we already know to become active and effective in our lives."
- Sometimes all it takes is a gentle reminder. Paul writes in Romans 15:14-15, "And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another. But I have written very boldly to you on some points so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God..."
- With every Bible Study, every sermon, every devotional, and with every prayer, God is planting seeds in you that will suddenly awaken, grow, flourish, and produce fruit at just the right time God requires. There is a time, a place, a situation, a moment, a person where suddenly all that God has been pouring into you will spring to life in ways you would never expect. And you may wonder to yourself, "Who IS this that is speaking? Who IS this that is doing these things?" It is YOU, but it is not you alone. It is more than you. It is the Spirit of Christ within you, giving you the words, giving you the power and strength, anointing you, opening your eyes to see the world as it really is, to see people as they really are, and to discover for yourself why Christ loved them so much that He gave His life for them.