

The Destruction of the Wrong Combination

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[0 : 00] Listen, the Lord has stronger coffee for us and a better breakfast. So let's turn to 2 John, where we're going to continue our time in God's Word.

And as you're turning to 2 John, I want to ask you guys a question. Speaking of food and beautiful things, have you ever had a meal that was just absolutely perfect?

Have you ever seen a piece of art that you thought, right where this is, every line, every stroke, it's perfect.

Perfect. Perfect. Just right. Friends, out of all the things in the world, in the whole of the world, nothing, nothing is more perfect than the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Nothing is more just right. Nothing is more untouchably complete than what Jesus has already given us.

[1 : 27] And here's what we need to embrace as John takes a turn in the second letter. Here's what we need to embrace. That because the gospel is absolutely perfect, to subtract anything from it or add anything to it is destructive.

And brothers and sisters, last night we had a good time around God's Word, thinking about the combustion of the right combination. This morning, on the flip side, we're going to look at the destruction of the wrong combination.

So if you would, turn to 2 John with me again. And I think we're going to just read the whole letter. We're going to focus on verses 7 on for this morning.

But I figure it's good for us to read the whole thing as we start out together. And friends, as we do, this truth is going to emerge to us.

That as with love and truth, may they make us a people who protect and promote the very perfection of the gospel. Let's read 2 John in its entirety.

[2 : 45] The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth. And not only I, but also all who know the truth, because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever.

Father, grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love.

I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as you were commanded by the Father. And now I ask you, dear lady, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.

And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so you should walk in it.

For many deceivers have gone out into the world. Those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh, such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.

[4 : 06] Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God.

Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your home or give him any greeting.

For whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works. Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink.

Instead, I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete. The children of your elect sister greet you.

Let's pray. Father, continue your work among us through these words. And Lord, reaffirm in our hearts the perfection of Jesus Christ and his gospel, we pray.

[5 : 19] In Jesus' name, so be it. All right, so for this morning, we're going to consider John's turning argument in three points.

So our first point, we're basing out of verse seven, and that's destruction through subtraction. And you could pick it up when we read the whole letter.

I mean, last night, weren't his words so warm? But now those words turn to words of warning, and they ought to get our attention, and we see what he's calling for here.

Friends, what we need to embrace is if Jesus and his gospel are the love and truth that are to be the life and warmth of every believer and every church, that if that's the case, if Jesus, in his perfection, in his truthfulness and love, if they are threatened, everything we hold dear is threatened.

John wants to stress this, but it's coming out of his commitment to truth and love that there is a time to protect and promote what is absolutely perfect.

[6 : 38] Look at this in the beginning of verse seven. For many deceivers have gone out into the world. It's almost like a reverse Great Commission, where we're sent to take the gospel into the nations.

Now as the gospel is going forward, the church has been around for some time at John's writing, but it's not only the gospel that has been going forward. As Jesus warned years before, wheat would always grow among the tares, and so as the truth and love of the gospel has gone out, so have deceptive and destructive lies.

They've gone out into the world, and note this word, deceivers. What do deceivers do? Yeah. I mean, they don't show you the full thing, right?

They're not like, well, this is the full package. This is what you're signing up for. Sign on the dotted line. They come with something that seems plausible, something even good, but you're being tricked.

You're being swindled, and so we need to understand that this air that's going out, it's not always going to be obvious. It might be pervasive, but it might not pronounce itself as clearly as it ought to, and John wants the believers to be aware of this.

[8 : 02] Now, what exactly were they saying that was so wrong? What were they getting wrong about Jesus? John actually tells us, look at the next part in verse seven.

Those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. What are they denying? The incarnation.

The incarnation. John is big on the incarnation, because frankly, the incarnation is a really big deal. This is not a doctrine we take out with the Christmas decorations around the holiday.

Oh yeah, it's that time of the year we consider the incarnation. The incarnation is wonderful, so I don't have Sean's permission, but I hope this works. I want to take a little aside to just love on the incarnation for a moment here.

That's not even really the point of the message, but if we're going to be a people that love the perfection of the gospel, let's just look at this aspect of the gospel for a moment. This aspect that in John's time was being threatened.

[9 : 06] Here's just three things that are just wonderful about the incarnation. First, the incarnation speaks to the nearness and likeness of God.

Of all the things we need to know in life, it's that our God is near and not far. And not only do we need to know that God is near and not far, we need to know what God is like.

And how are we going to know what God is like when we can't see His face and live? The incarnation answers these deep longings of our humanity more than anything else.

Listen to John from John's gospel. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And we have seen His glory. In seeing Jesus, we've seen the glory of the Father and we have lived. Glory as of the only Son from the Father.

[10 : 16] Full. Full of grace and truth. And I'm going to just hop over to 1 John and read you the first three verses. These are wonderful.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the word of life.

The life was made manifest. That's through the incarnation. And we have seen it and testified to it and proclaimed to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.

That which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you so that you may have fellowship with us. And indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Oh my goodness. What we have in the incarnation. These realities of God's nearness and knowing what God is like is the basis for our community.

[11 : 29] But there's more than that with the incarnation. The incarnation speaks to our substitute and mediator. Consider this. 1 Timothy 2.

For there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men. The man, Christ Jesus. Romans 5. As for by one man's disobedience, the first Adam, the many were made sinners. So by one man's obedience, the second Adam, Jesus Christ, the many will be made righteous. Consider the Heidelberg Catechism, the 16th question. Why must He, why must Jesus be a true and righteous man?

He must be a true man because the justice of God requires the same human nature which has sinned should pay for sin.

[12 : 37] He must be a righteous man because one who is himself a sinner, he cannot pay for others. There is no gospel without the incarnation.

I need Jesus to be truly man so that His sinless life can cover my sinful life.

In order for this to be an authentic and acceptable sacrifice to God, Jesus Christ must be man. He must take on flesh.

That makes this work. But He also must be God because if He were not and He were not sinless, His sacrifice could not atone for the sins of all the people who would believe in Him for all times. The incarnation is huge. One more, one more. And this is timely. This is timely. The incarnation speaks to the humility and glory of Jesus. How many of you see just such a rank lack of humility in our culture?

[13 : 47] Pride is elevated. How Jesus is so different than the world? Here in the incarnation, we see His humility and glory in a way that I don't know how we see anything more beautiful.

Let me read it from Philippians 2. Though He was in the form of God. We even sang about this this morning. Did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, incarnation, and being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name so that the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Friends, this is not going away with our Christmas decorations. This is a truth we want to hang out all year and we cannot afford to lose it.

So, thank you for letting me go off on the incarnation for a little bit. We're getting back on our tracks tracks with John's argument, but I just, I wanted to love on that together for a bit.

[15 : 30] Here's what we need to see. We don't know exactly how they were denying Jesus' incarnation in John's day. Most scholars, though, believe it had a Gnostic flavor, which they would have seen the body as bad or unimportant.

So, they may have come with a subtraction like this. Oh, Jesus is too spiritual to have a body. Oh, Jesus is, his divinity, there's no way he could actually take on flesh.

And you can see where the deception comes in, there's always going to be something that catches us a bit. But if we deny that he actually came in the flesh, look at all the perfection we are denied.

All are grounds for truth and for love. And here's where John starts getting pretty serious. And you're going to see these turns he makes in 2nd and 3rd John.

In this way, he's kind of like Gandalf. At first, you can think he's just this nice old guy that really knows how to smoke a pipe. And you're like, oh, nice Gandalf. Gandalf gets into a different gear when it's time for it.

[16 : 39] And we see that with the apostle of love. He can change a gear. So, what does John call this kind of subtraction? Read on in verse 7.

Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Whoa. Now, these are loaded accusations.

And I don't want us to get lost in them. I want us to catch what John is saying. Who else is known as the deceiver? Satan. There is something very satanic about subtracting from the gospel.

Then he says antichrist. Now, don't get into like Timothy mode where you're trying to think about the antichrist and figure out that. No, it's talking about a position. An antichrist position to be opposed or

against.

To subtract is to be satanic. To subtract is to be anti or against Christ. These things aren't, oh, that's a really creative thought that you have there about the incarnation.

[17 : 54] Yeah, maybe Jesus, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. That's satanic. That's antichrist. Now, you can nuance how you'll work that out in the community, but John, the apostle of love is being very clear in truth with this section.

and it goes for any doctrine. We are looking at something that is completely perfect. Why would we think of taking anything away from it?

Usually, that motivation is because we want to be more accepted by the people around us. We're tempted to edit the gospel that it might fit in our lives with less trouble.

We'll get to that as we go. We have a second point to get to. Destruction through addition. This is where we look at verses 8 and 9. Now, there's a difference between a hypothetical threat and an actual threat.

The threat that John's talking about against the perfection of the gospel, it's actual. And it's actual for us too. And I want you to see this because this is the weight of verse 8 that we're meant to feel.

[19 : 07] Watch yourselves. So that you may not lose what we have worked for but may win a full reward. Watch yourselves is in the plural imperative, which means it's a command for the whole community.

John is saying to this unspecified church that he speaks about in such familial, warm terms, watch yourselves. Watch yourselves. we need to hear this as a command because the threat is real and active.

And what we need to understand is that there could be a loss here. And indeed, there is a loss. This could, depending on how you understand the Greeks, speak of the laborer's loss or the listener's loss.

But for us, to lose anything of the gospel is to lose the life and the truth that give us all the warmth and love we need.

To lose this is to lose what matters. And the destruction goes on. How he describes this is very interesting. Look at verse 9 with me.

[20 : 15] Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God. John's back to these metaphors.

Very helpful here. Very helpful. Anyone who goes on ahead. What a picture for not just trying to destroy the gospel through subtraction, but addition.

And I think this can actually be more tempting. I just need to add something to the gospel. It's like when your kids are on a hike and they go on ahead of you.

It's not actually what you want because they're going outside of healthy and safe boundaries. But there seems to be a tolerance in the evangelical church for going on ahead.

Meandering off, looking for more. But John uses another metaphor. We're not to wander off from it. We're not to go on ahead as though that were needed.

[21 : 21] We are to abide, John tells us, to find our life and our home and our place. To abide means to stay and build a life.

Friends, the gospel is the perfection of God for us. Nothing can be taken from it. Nothing can be added to it without taking away from it.

So remember that perfect meal? Well, if you added just one more dash of seasoning, it's no longer just right.

One more stroke to a masterpiece, it's no longer a masterpiece. It's divine vandalism. And John is intolerant. The apostle of love is intolerant of these kind of threats to the gospel.

He's warning the whole church to be watchful for these friends and that's so necessary for us. And I believe it starts with a discontentment in our own hearts.

[22 : 30] We become gospel bored. We tire of hearing it. That's a real symptom when someone talks about the gospel and your heart no longer alights to it.

Now you may ask me, Andrew, is it realistic that I'll always have affection for the gospel? Is it realistic that who Jesus is and what he's done in all its perfection will always be captivating to me? Humanly, we are very weak. And I understand why and how we struggle. But when we actually think about what this is, we should never get over this.

There is enough in this. And here's the deal. There is enough that we actually haven't plumbed. We don't need to go beyond. I don't need to take away from it or add to it. What it is, there is more for me to consider.

There is more for us to ponder and dwell on. So if you feel those numbings coming in, the answer is not to go on ahead. And the answer is not to tailor it and cut it back so it fits better in your life is to behold the perfection and to live in that.

[23 : 48] The call, friends, here is not to add to the gospel but to abide in it. And I would ask you in your life, is the gospel the most sacred place? The most safe place?

The most dear place? It's meant to be our place for life. And what are they strained from? It's the teaching of Christ.

Did you see that in the text? Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ. I'm shorthanding that as the gospel but what that includes is teaching about Jesus and teaching from Jesus.

Colossians calls us to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. When Paul uses that language the word of Christ is probably a longer way of saying the gospel.

Who Jesus is and what he's done that's meant to steep in you like a tea bag steeps in tea. And here we're called to abide in his teaching and that makes sense with what we learned last night.

[24 : 55] Friends, we must learn this life of abiding because the danger is when we don't we no longer have God John says.

Does not have God or his exact words. Why is this? I think David Jackman says it well as soon as we leave the basis of God's revealed truth we begin to venture into unreality.

I remember having a conversation with my aunt in the car and she asked me Andrew what do you think heaven is going to be like? And I go well Aunt Julie the Bible says no no no no no I didn't ask you what the Bible said what do you think heaven's going to be like?

I'm like well Aunt Julie heaven's a real place like I don't get to make up what it is and isn't and we started having this conversation she's like well let me tell you what I think heaven is and she just goes into that that's a form of unreality.

Anytime we say or make Jesus something that he's not we are no longer walking in the truth we're walking in unreality and what is the ground for all our fellowship and hope?

[26 : 14] It's in the truth of who Christ is unchanged unfiltered as it's been given from the Father to us. So that said this is where we're going to land on this third point.

We don't just want to seek to protect this we want to promote this. We want to build up godly convictions and this is what John is calling his listeners to do here.

This kind of conviction comes out of our care for the perfection of the gospel. Look at verses 10 and 11 with me. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

Now I will admit to you I have misunderstood and misapplied this for a long time. In the city we would get JW's Jehovah's Witnesses by the house all the time and I'd always talk to them on the steps never in the house because I wanted to be faithful to John you can't come in my house and I wouldn't say what's up to the JW's either because I didn't want to give them a greeting I'd be like hmm yeah real kind and warm real actual apologetics right there that's not what John's talking about if we're understanding the cultural context to bring someone into your home a traveling preacher there were good ones and obviously bad ones in these times to welcome them into your home and to show them any greeting is to show them your support you're saying you stamp them now I think that looks a lot different in our times but I think there are lessons that we can learn from John here first John calls out their air there will be deceivers who go out into the world and after talking to a few of you you're like a church that goes out into the world like you're here for a little while then you're there

I think God has a special calling on this church for that I think there is a lot of kingdom potential and purposes there I'll talk about that later but you guys will be in different churches different places throughout your life and you're going to run into a lot of things John would have you be able to discern what is the air John says very clearly here in his times the air is that the incarnation was at threat and that threatens the perfection of the gospel you need to know in your times and places what are the threats around you and what are the threats facing God's people what are these plausible arguments that are sneaking in that could deceive them and rob them from all this life and warmth that truth and love bring us and friends we're going to need grace for that but John would

tell you never never take away from the gospel to make that happen never add to it instead abide in it and friends the more it becomes precious to you and you're like this is my place above all places the less likely you will compromise it when you are in a hard situation all right we'll wrap it up here so much to say

[29 : 42] I'm glad we have more sessions together here's the deal if you love anything you're going to protect it you really are and again we're talking about the apostle John now we're seeing a little bit of a different side maybe the son of thunder is reemerging a little bit but it's coming out of love it's coming out of love we don't want to be convictional because we're self-important that gives off a vibe doesn't it you know when someone like is being righteous but it's really just self-righteous we need convictions that come out of a realization of how important Jesus is when we come out of those and not just that he's important but he's everything to us that warms up the whole thing so John just gives this like corporate warning and then let's consider how he ends the letter the last two verses though I have much to write to you

I would rather not use paper and ink instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face why John so that our joy may be complete the children of your elect sister greet you friends let us not forget under all this is John's desire for our joy and that joy will only be complete as we together protect and promote the completeness and perfection of the gospel we have in Jesus Christ would you pray with me father we we want to thank you together we can easily confess that we have more in Christ than we have yet realized so we pray help us abide

Lord when we are tempted to shave when we're tempted to add help us abide help us find our life more and more in Jesus who he is and what he's done for us Lord we thank you we are not alone in this thank you that you hear our prayers answer in this moment and in the moments beyond this moment we pray in Jesus name so be it