

Navigating Through Chaos

1 John #5

1 John 2:18-27

But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, without self-control. They will have the “form” of godliness. But will deny its power.

When the main power fuse blows in the middle of the night, in the middle of the summer heat in Florida, you are headed for time of chaos and disorientation that wouldn't wish on your worst enemy. First, you wake up in a puddle of sweat as deep as the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans combined. Then, you look out the window to see whether the power is still on in the neighborhood. When you discover it is, you tell yourself: “it must be the main fuse in the main breaker.” But, friend, your problems in the dark are just beginning. You've got to make it past your teenagers corridor without spraining your ankles on dislocated batteries on the floor from the video game console. You've got to cross your fingers and pray that all of the grease from last night's fried chicken was cleaned up from the kitchen floor. You've got to make it through the mountains of clothes in the laundry room without getting lost and swallowed. And when you get to the garage, you've got to perform an emergency archaeological operation just to get access to the main breaker box. Switching the bad fuse for the good one depends on your ability to successfully navigate the chaos, disorientation, and disorder.

Our lives and our walk with Jesus in it can sometimes be a lot like that night when the main fuse blows in the middle of a hot summer night in Florida. We are resting in peace and tranquility one moment, but having to navigate through chaos, disorientation, and disorder in the next. People of God, the more things change, the more they stay the same. John's original audience in Asia Minor (i.e., Turkey) lived in relative peace and tranquility while he was with them. But when he departed for Ephesus, only to be later exiled to the Island of Patmos, the main power fuse blew. Gnostics – Anti-Christ's – came to the churches the apostles started and taught them that Jesus didn't really come in the flesh, only in spirit form. And then they told them they had to rely on their “special insight and knowledge” that common folks aren't privy to in order to be saved. The result was chaos, disorientation, and disorder. 1 John 2:18-27 is a passage that tells these believers how to navigate through the chaos in order to make it to the breaker box to change the main fuse. It will guide help us navigate through ours as well. Turn there with me.

¹⁸ Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. ²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. ²¹ I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. ²² Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son. ²³ No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also. ²⁴ As for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is what he promised us—eternal life. ²⁶ I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. ²⁷ As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.

1. Respect the Hour Upon Us (18)

- **Get With the Times:** (1) My daughter and her friends often tell me that I need to “get with the times.” (2) I think I'd be a good chaperone to school dances. But they don't. They know that I will refuse to rent a tuxedo. Why would I need to? I have the old one from the 1980s I wore to the prom with the large bow tie and the shirt ruffles. (3) They know that I wouldn't respect the hour upon me.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** We don't navigate through chaos by wishing it away. We navigate first by respecting that the hour is upon us for chaos.
- **Time Is Important in John's Writing:** (1) In John's Gospel, Jesus tells his audience that this is not the last hour quite often. For example, when Jesus' mother asked him to perform a miracle in Cana, he said: “Woman, why do you bother me? My hour has not yet come” (2:4). But then in John 12:23, he says “the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” (2) Now here John tells us: “this is the last hour.” This is important for understanding the chaos God subjects you to as a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not a reference to chronological time. It's a reference to the theological significance of the time we are now living in. When Jesus died, rose again, and ascended to glory, it was an end of one age and the beginning of another. “End Times” began when Jesus ascended, and the apostles were handed the Gospel torch.
- **And the Closer We Get to the End of the End Times We've Been in for 2023 Years:** (1) the more chaos will increase on the earth because the devil knows his days are numbered. (2) And the more the chaos increases, the more people who accept the apostle's message about Jesus become the target. They will face dangerous pressure from outside influences like “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” And they will face dangerous pressure from inside by people pretending to be something that they are not.
- **App:** Don't shake your fist at God when he doesn't take away your chaos. Respect the chaos. It's the biblical period of time we are living in. You cannot navigate through it if you don't respect. But if you understand and respect, you can see it for what it is: a step closer to Jesus calling his children home.

2. Recognize the Roots of the Rot (18b, 19, 22)

- **The Teenage Boy's Room:** (1) Last week, I walked into my son's room and said: "what in the world is that stench? It smells Jimmy Hoffa's grave got rained on and his body came to the surface in here." (2) Then I told him to clean and deodorize. He did. And it still didn't go away. (3) We looked at the shoes. It wasn't the shoes. We looked for food under the bed. Nothing. (4) Finally, I found the roots of the rot: it was a dead squirrel who had taken his final breaths above the air vent.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** The greatest chaos we face often comes from within. It's often where the root of the rot lies.
- **The Root of the Rot is Unexpected:** (1) John says in the middle of v18 you have heard the "Antichrist" (singular) is coming. Even now many antichrists (plural) have come." The first reference refers to the diabolical figure coming at the end of this age with which we are familiar. He will set himself up against Christ. But he's not the main focus of this passage. It's the antichrists that John references who are the root of the rot. They were former friends, acquaintances, neighbors, members of the flock who had abandoned essential beliefs about Jesus. They had become Gnostics and in their "knowledge" they thought they were smarter than the apostles. John calls them what they were: Anti-Christ. (v22).
- **The Root of the Rot was Unsettling:** John says v19 that they went out from among us, but they never really belonged to us in the first place. If they had, they would have remained. That's unsettling because it indicates a significant betrayal. Like Judas Iscariot, they had intimate, close, fellowship with John. But, like Judas Iscariot, they were never really a part. Did they lose their salvation? No. They were not Christians to begin with.
- **App:** The fact that root of the rot usually comes from within is by diabolical design. The greatest hurts you will ever be subjected to in life will come from within. And the devil designs his attack in that way to keep you in the chaos, deceit, and disorientation.

3. Rely on the Testimony (24)

- **Sealed Letters:** (1) A letter in your mailbox marked "urgent" or "confidential" addressed to you in handwritten form is extremely important. (2) There would be tremendous concern if you turned that letter over to find out that it had been tampered with. (3) The Apostles testimony about Jesus was a personal letter given to the early Christians that was sealed with their blood. They had no choice but to rely on it.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** Navigating through chaos requires trusting in what God has spoken.
- **Relying on the Testimony for Original Audience:** (1) I love v24. It's one of my favorite verses in the Bible. It begins with "see to it." That's a cohortative. That means it functions as an imperative: make sure you make every effort to "see to" what I'm about to tell you. (2) "What you have heard from the beginning" – what the testimony of the apostles was about Jesus coming in the flesh. (3) "Remains" – literally "abides." Let the testimony of what they said about Jesus live/breathe/exist inside the chambers of your heart. (4) If you will "remain" in the testimony, you will "remain" in the Father and Son." In other words, living in the testimony of the apostles is to live in the Father and Son.
- **Relying on the Testimony for Us:** (1) The Evangelical World is much different now. We may not have many among us who deny that Jesus came in the flesh, but we have plenty who do not rely on the Promises of God. (2) There are 8,810 promises in the Bible. Unfortunately, God not putting on you more than you can handle isn't one of them. Sometimes, he puts more on you that you can handle so you have no choice but live in those promises.
- **App:** The way out of the chaos comes via only one option. It's relying on the testimony. It's standing on the Promises. When you doubt them or don't believe them, in the chaos you will remain.

4. Reside in the Anointing

- **Yes Sir:** (1) Proper manners in the South rise and fall on four phrases: (a) Yes Ma'am; (b) No Ma'am; (c) Yes Sir; (d) No Sir. (2) Do you know where we get the word "sir?" From England, where men are officially given the title of "sir" after they were knighted.
- **Main Idea of the Point:** We can navigate through chaos because we have an anointing. We have been knighted by Jesus.
- **John Mentions "Anointing" 4 Times in the Passage:** (1) "But you have an anointing" (v20); (2) "the anointing you received remains (abides) in you" (v27). (3) The anointing teaches" (v27). (4) The anointing is real, not counterfeit (v27). (5) All are very important.
- **What the "Anointing" Doesn't Mean and What It Does:** (1) It doesn't mean you have some special "anointing" that another believer does not. (2) Instead, it is this: When you repented of your sin and placed your faith in Christ, you were born of the Spirit into the Kingdom of God. God himself came to dwell inside you by His Spirit. And his Holy Spirit serves as our Salvation Seal; Counselor; and Helper. (3) We get the word "anointing" from a shepherd placing oil on the head of the sheep to heal his wounds. We received this "anointing" of the Holy Spirit at salvation. The Spirit is the one who gives us the oil in our lamp to keep us burning. We all have that if we know Jesus, not just preachers.
- **Consequently, Abiding in the Anointing:** (1) Can only happen when the posture of our heart and our core being from which we think, choose, and believe assumes the posture of surrender. (2) That's the way out of chaos. It's giving up, not in, and letting God take care of it. (3) When a dog approaches its owner, it runs to greet them. It flops and rolls on its back and exposes its belly, thereby making itself vulnerable. It assumes a position from which it cannot fight, and it leaves its vital organs exposed. It would never do that for an enemy. But for a loving master, it is that dogs joy.
- **App:** In order to abide in the Anointing, we must abide in the Spirit. To do that, we must go belly up as an expression of trust and surrender. That's the only way to see clearly in a world of Anti-Christ and increasing chaos. Amen. Amen. And Amen.