

Prayer

If we look into ourselves Lord Jesus, we do not find all the truth, love, care and compassion we would like others to find in us. By the power of Your Holy Spirit, help us to be honest with ourselves, to see our own limitations, and to confess our inadequacies and sin. Then, may we submit to Your graciousness and accept Your humbling and merciful forgiveness. There is no other way for us to stand tall, except to stand tall in You: AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: 'New beginnings'

Praise God that after the most terrible things that happen to us, our Lord can present us with the possibility of new things, and the hope that what is new will heal the hurts of the past.

On-going prayers

- Give thanks to God for His Word and the revelation of His will
- Pray for news editors who decide what we hear about on the news
- Pray for all who live in polluted cities where a short life is expected

Meditation

We live in an extraordinary world, where there are people who:

Use positions of advantage for personal gain at the expense of others;
 Prey upon the weak and use them without respect for dignity or humanity;
 Work in public services but do not accept the full accountability of their office;
 Use bullying and violence to get what they want and keep others in subjection;
 Use money to influence what happens for financial gain, at the expense of others;

But there are also very good people who because of their faith in Jesus,
 Identify with the world's poor, and work for justice and freedom amongst all people;
 Offer themselves in selfless public service, and refuse to engage in corruption;
 Strive for truth in all its forms, spiritually, intellectually and compassionately;
 Use peaceful means to promote the good of all and respect for true Faith;
 Bring justice to our world by keeping the timeless truths of Your Word.
 Give us a heart to see good in this world and identify with it personally.

Bible Study - 1 John 2:26-29

²⁶ I have written these things to you about those who would deceive you. ²⁷ As for you, the anointing you received from Him abides in you, and so you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about all things, and this is true and not a lie, as it has taught you, abide in Him. ²⁸ And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears we may have confidence and not be put to shame before Him at His coming. ²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of Him.

Review

This is a well known passage, and it is comes at a point in John's letter where he is seeking to help the members of his churches to stand firm against those who were attempting to deceive them (2:26). It seems that they had been shaken by false teaching denying that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, and John wrote to them to stand firm against the teaching of such an 'antichrist' (2:18-25). Jesus had predicted that such things would happen and cause trouble to believers (see Matt 24:23f.) and now John could see this prophesy come true in the lives of the people for whom he cared. All else was comparatively unimportant, said John, so stand firm and 'abide in Him' (2:28).

Such a message is necessary even today, when the 'last days' have now continued for two thousand years, and people of faith still find it hard to remain in a state of readiness for the Lord's return. John's words remind all Christians of the importance of their first faith, or as John puts it 'the anointing you received from Him who abides in you' (2:27). John's understanding of the work of Christ is that His presence, and that of His Holy Spirit (see John 14:25f.) is like an 'anointing' of God on the Christian soul. This anointing is a purifying presence that not only signifies salvation and the individual's relationship with God, but also makes it possible to live according to Christ's great commandment to 'love one another'. As far as John was concerned, there was no need for anyone to teach this to a Christian, because it was utterly basic to faith; hence his next comment; 'so you do not need anyone to teach you.'

The key to the whole passage is the phrase 'abide in Him' (2:27,28), which reflects the famous chapter of John's Gospel about the vine that abides in Christ (John 15). The one who abides in Christ cannot be deceived (2:26) or deviated from the path of truth because the truth is living within! I do not advocate changing the word 'abide' in Scripture, because no other English word can hold together the ideas of permanence and active 'dwelling' conveyed by the word. It is true that the word can mean 'to put up with' or 'tolerate', but it is hardly difficult to work out the life affirming and positive meaning of the word, where it is used. Each person who knows that Christ and God's Holy Spirit abides within, knows that the truth of the Gospel is no lie (2:27).

For this reason, John is completely confident that his appeal to the basic testimony of each Christian will expose what is true and what is false, and enable the Christian community to come together unashamed and unspoilt around the shared witness of a faith in Christ, who will come again at His own time (2:28). The testimony of faith that abides makes the difference, and gives a Christian community its security.

The life of the church today can be different! I once heard this passage quoted when a preacher used it to declare he needed no training to preach, only the witness of the Holy Spirit. He stated boldly that what God had given was not to be changed; unfortunately, everyone else present knew that the individual concerned had been challenged because the community was not convinced of his knowledge of God's Word. In those few moments, I saw this passage turned on its head. A text that reflects the life of the early Christian church community built around the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, was used out of context to justify not studying God's Word.

This passage should not be used by us in this way, or to make a case about the use of gifts of ministry in the church. There are many texts in the New Testament that speak about the serious obligations of the leaders of God's people (see Romans 12:1f. 1 Tim 6:11f. etc.). We do far better to call all God's people to the true 'anointing' of the Christian, which is the subject of John's letter. This is the unity we have with each other through the love of Jesus Christ. We should not need to teach each other about this (2:27)!

Questions (for use in groups)

1. Discuss in your group what this passage means to you, and especially, the meaning of verse 27.
2. What is basic to all Christians, and what divides us as His people? Think about different church groups you know in replying to this question.
3. What does it mean to you to 'abide' in Christ, and for Him to 'abide' in you?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

I feel uncertain in giving the example used in the Bible study, but the only time I have ever heard this passage of Scripture used is in circumstances like this. More than once I have heard people argue that putting time and effort into their ministry role is not required because God has already given them the 'anointing' necessary for the task. I would never wish anyone to operate within the church without a suitable anointing of God's Spirit, but to say that this means we do not have to put any work into it is going beyond what this passage says. Unfortunately, the true message of our confidence in Christ's abiding presence with His people both now and in the future, is lost if we use it to try and make convenient points that are not supported by Scripture as a whole. We cannot ignore the importance of these things.

Ideas for exploring discipleship

- Try to put to one side the main theme developed from this study and look at the rest of the passage. What does it say to you? Read over the text and allow the Lord to speak to you about what it can mean to you now.

- *Pray for people who feel defensive about their role in preaching and leading within the church today. Pray that God will renew them by His Spirit and give them a love for His Word and for prayer.*
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Final Prayer

Almighty God, we praise and bless you for the peace we can have with You through the work of Jesus Christ, and for the work of the Holy Spirit which energises us to continue the same work of reconciliation throughout the world. Glory be to You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN
