

Excerpts from Life-Study of 1 John,

Message 23

**THE TEACHING OF
THE DIVINE ANOINTING (2)**

Bible Verses:

1 John 2:23 Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who confesses the Son has the Father also.

24 As for you, that which you heard from the beginning, let it abide in you. If that which you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true

and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

In the previous message we pointed out that according to 1 John 2:20-27 the Father and the Son are one. It is absolutely correct to say that the Son is not separate from the Father, nor the Father from the Son. However, there is still a distinction between the three of the Godhead, a distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Concerning the Trinity, we should not drift to either of two extremes, to the extreme of emphasizing the three or the extreme of emphasizing the one. Some Christians have gone to the extreme of emphasizing the three to the neglect of the one. Others drift to the extreme of the one and neglect the three. We need to be balanced. In order to be balanced we need to emphasize both aspects of the Trinity—the aspect of the three and the aspect of the one. Because in the foregoing message we pointed out that the Father and the Son are one, in this message I would like to say a balancing word that although the Father and the Son are one, there is

still a definite distinction between them. In the sense of distinction, the Father is the Father, the Son is the Son, and the Spirit is the Spirit. Although there is a distinction between the three of the Godhead, the three nonetheless are still one.

While, therefore, we are compelled to use terms like “substance” and “Person,” we are not to think of them as identical with what we understand as human substance or personality. The terms are not explanatory, but only approximately correct, as must necessarily be the case with any attempt to define the Nature of God.

I especially appreciate Griffith Thomas’s word that the term person must not be pressed too far “or it will lead to Tritheism,” the belief in three Gods. In the same principle, when we say that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all one, we should not press this too far, or we will fall into another kind of error. Some have used sunlight as an illustration: the sun is the Father, the ray is the Son, and the shining is the Spirit. Another illustration is that of ice, water, and vapor, with these three respectively representing the Father,

the Son, and the Spirit. Such illustrations may be used for temporary help; they should not be pressed too far, or they will lead to error.

Let us now go on to consider again 1 John 2:20-27. Verses 20 and 21 say, “You have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it and because no lie is of the truth.” In verse 20 John speaks of the anointing, and in verse 21 he speaks of the truth. No doubt, the truth in verse 21 is related to the anointing, and the anointing points to the truth.

In verse 25 John goes on to say, “And this is the promise which He Himself promised us, the eternal life.” In this verse John does not say, “They promised us”; he says, “He Himself promised us.” The singular pronoun He in this verse refers to both the Son and the Father in the preceding verse. This indicates that the Son and the Father are one. As far as our experience of the divine life is concerned, the Son, the Father, Jesus, and Christ are all one. It is not that only the Son, and not the Father, is eternal life to us. It is that Jesus, being the Christ as the Son and the Father, is the eternal, divine life to us for our

portion. The point we are emphasizing here is that the antecedent of the pronoun He is the Son and the Father and that this indicates that the Son and the Father are one.

In verse 27 John says, “And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.” I would call your attention to the pronouns Him (used twice) and His. As was the case in verse 25, these pronouns refer to both the Son and the Father. This use of singular pronouns proves strongly that the Son and the Father are one.

In verse 27 John says, “You have no need that anyone teach you.” Concerning the indwelling of the Divine Trinity (John 14:17, 23), we do not need anyone to teach us. By the anointing of the all-inclusive compound Spirit, who is the composition of the Divine Trinity, we know and enjoy the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as our life and life supply.

In verse 27 John also says that the anointing is true. The anointing within us of the compound

Spirit as the composition of the Triune God, who is true (5:20), is a reality, not a falsehood. This can be proved by our actual and practical experience in our Christian life.

John concludes 2:27 with an exhortation to abide in the Triune God. The Greek word translated “abide” is *meno*, a word that means “to stay” (in a given place, state, relation, or expectancy); hence, to abide, remain, and dwell. To abide in Him is to abide in the Son and in the Father. This is to remain and dwell in the Lord (John 15:4-5). It is also to abide in the fellowship of the divine life and to walk in the divine light (1 John 1:2-3, 6-7), that is, to abide in the divine light (2:10). We should practice this abiding according to the teaching of the all-inclusive anointing so that our fellowship with God (1:3, 6) may be maintained.

Read the verses and footnotes online: <https://text.recoveryversion.bible/>

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Note: This version is not intended to be printed as material for pursuit during the small group gathering. Instead, it is to be used as additional reference for brothers and sisters who want to prepare in advance for fellowship on the message. We include here notes from the commentaries of the brothers in the life-study radio program. The points from these commentaries can help enrich our understanding and, eventually, our fellowship with the saints on the selected portions of the life-study message. We still recommend that, if possible, the saints still listen to the [audio message](#) in addition to reading the [life-study message](#) for personal pursuit and for preparation for small group gatherings. We also wish to point out that these notes have not been fully polished.

[Commentary]:

Introduction

[CW]: At the very heart of the Christian faith is the truth concerning the nature and essence of God Himself. The Bible very clearly reveals that our God is Triune. It's from this truth that we derive the word Trinity, which means three-one. Our God is uniquely one, yet is eternally three. Over the centuries, various terms have been used in an attempt to describe these essential characteristics of God. The most common of these borrowed terms may be persons. We often hear the word persons used in reference to the three of the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, who is Jesus Christ, and God the Spirit. Though this term does help us in some regard to understand one aspect of the Trinity, it's critical to keep in mind that the Bible itself never uses this term in such a context. And further, we should always use this term carefully when applied to God, because its over or incorrect use can lead us into the serious error of having three gods, either consciously or unconsciously. Ron Kangas is here to help us today. Ron, I'm glad you're able to join us again as we pick up the other half of the divine Trinity here, don't we?

[RK]: I counted a blessing to be able to fellowship from the other aspect. I appreciated the opening word as very thoughtful and very clear. We don't object to the traditional word "person", but may we acknowledge a few things. Number one, that the Bible doesn't mandate the use of this word; therefore, we're not acting contrary to the Scripture if we elect not to use it or to minimize it. And let's also acknowledge that the use of this word has become a tradition for centuries. That doesn't mean it has no value. It simply means it's a tradition. And the other thing I would like to say is that for most modern people, the word "person" is not all that clear when applied to God. If you see a man over there, you may say he's a nice person, and if there are two men, there are two persons, two people. So, if we are rather imprecise or insistent on the use of this word to describe the three in the Godhead-the Father, the Son, and the Spirit-in their coexistence and co-inherence in the Godhead-we may fall into error, perhaps unintentionally. What is in our heart to do is to adhere first not to tradition, nor to systematic theology, but to the divine revelation in the scriptures, and where the revelation in the scriptures diverges or surpasses the tradition, then we must let go of the tradition and cling only to the word of the divine revelation. In brief, our view, according to the Scriptures, is that there is One true and living God, the unique, self-existing, ever-existing God. He is one God. But this one God is three: Father, Son, and Spirit. All three are God. All three are eternal. All three exist at the same time; therefore, all three coexist, and furthermore, they co-inhere; they dwell in one another. Although there is, in reality and in revelation, a distinction among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, there is no separation. This is the perspective from which our brother Witness Lee carried out his ministry, and in particular spoke these messages on First John that touch on the divine Trinity. And this is also our perspective in what we may call follow-up fellowship or expanded fellowship, and this is our testimony concerning the truth.

[CW]: If you were with us in our last program, we saw some verses we'll touch again today that really draw the attention or the primary focus to the aspect of oneness, as opposed to the aspect of the three, in other words, that these three in the Godhead are absolutely inseparable, and in some sense there is a clear identification of the one with the other. And one of the verses that we used, and we'll bring it up again right now, is chapter two, verse 23: Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either. He who confesses the Son has the Father also, showing that the denial or confession of

the Son equals that of the Father, equals a denial and/or a confession of the Father. So again, this matter of no separation is really underscored in this verse. Today, however, the focus of the program, as you'll hear as Witness Lee begins to share, is definitely to confirm and reaffirm the distinction between the three in an eternal sense. With that, why don't we join Witness Lee, and then Ron will come back and hear your development.

Part 1

[CW]: Ron, of course, I'll give you the full liberty to touch any aspect of this that you feel to. I would like to ask you a little bit, though, as we begin about this matter of there being two aspects or the twofoldness of divine truth. Maybe touch that concept a little bit or a principle.

[RK]: The expression "the twofoldness of divine truth" we take from a Bible student and scholar from the 19th century, Robert Govette, here's a little booklet by that title. It is of the nature of the divine revelation in the Scriptures to be balanced. That is presenting the truth in a twofold way. This applies, for instance, to the matter of salvation, which is altogether by grace, not of works, and the kingdom reward, which is related to works and is not simply a gift of grace granted to everyone, no matter how they live and serve the Lord. Regarding God, who is Triune. On the one hand, the Bible reveals strongly that God is one in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord, your God, is One. There is one God alone. There is no other." We may say this is the governing principle concerning the revelation concerning God in the Scriptures, but we must face the fact, if we would be faithful, that the Bible emphatically reveals that this one God is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Therefore, the One is Three, and the Three are One. So we may say that God is three one, or that God is one three. What we are attempting to do is to be faithful and balanced in speaking of the divine revelation, which we must do with care, to show that there is a distinction among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. If we do not uphold the distinction, we lose sight of the three. There are not the three in the Godhead. We have one God, but we do not have the three properly understood. However, if we go on to speak of separation, as if the Father could be here without the Son, or the Son without the Spirit and the Father, that is serious because it violates the principle of the one, and you can't lightly speak of the Father, Son, and the Spirit being separate persons and then turn around and say they are the one God. It's much safer to uphold distinction - that preserves the three without separation - that preserves the one.

[CW]: Let's come back to now this use of the word "person" or "persons" in describing the aspect, and in a sense, it's useful. And in this ministry, at times we hear Witness Lee use this term, applying to the three of the Godhead, but there is the danger of the overuse, which we alluded to earlier. We're going to see more of that in this coming portion. So why don't we join Witness Lee for that fellowship.

Part 2

[CW]: Ron, I appreciate Witness Lee's presentation here. Good example of ice, water, and vapor. Again, useful to explore one of the aspects, but it's not complete and it doesn't stand alone any more than the use of the word "persons" stands alone in a proper understanding of the Trinity, does it?

[RK]: That's right. The illustration is temporarily helpful in a limited way, but the use of illustrations fades in significance in relation to the use of the word "person" as a virtual litmus test of orthodoxy, where someone wants to discern whether we are in the faith, and asking, you know, do we believe what the Scriptures reveal? Asking, do you believe in the three persons in one God? On no definition of person, as long as we would sign on to that, then we're orthodox. I would submit this is risky to adopt theological shorthand and to impose that on the believers in saying, do you or do you not subscribe to this formulaic presentation of the truth concerning the divine Trinity? If you do, we accept you as a brother. If you don't, we reject you. It doesn't matter how you express your faith, what you believe in the word. This, I believe, is not worthy of life in the body of Christ. It is not the way to determine whether someone is holding to the faith once for all delivered. We may use that term in our theological discourse, but to insist on its use and to judge others for not using it, I feel, is not only

uncharitable; it is really contrary to the Christian life as revealed in the New Testament. A believer should be able to testify clearly, plainly, directly, straightforwardly, and emphatically that he or she believes in what the Bible reveals. There is one God; He is uniquely one. Only He is the true and living God. He is Triune, the Father, Son, and Spirit. All three are God. Yet there are not three Gods. Neither is there one God who temporarily exists as Father, then as Son, and then as Spirit. Apparently, for many of those that consider themselves called by God to uphold orthodoxy, apparently that's not sufficient for them. But it's the way we have taken, and the way we will continue to take, because it is the way of the divine revelation.

[CW]: Ron, in that section at the beginning, Witness Lee referred to W. H. Griffith Thomas, I think one of the co-founders even of Dallas Theological Seminary, and in the printed life-study, I notice that he actually quotes from Thomas's writings on the use of this term "persons", and he makes exactly the point that we're making or attempting to make in our program today, and he says in that short passage that, like all human language, it is liable to be accused of being inadequate and even positive error. It certainly, and again, this is using the term person. It certainly must not be pressed too far, or it will lead to tritheism. While we use the term to denote distinctions in the Godhead, we do not imply distinctions which amount to separateness, but distinctions which are associated with essential mutual coinherence or inclusiveness of the three. Sounds very similar to what Witness Lee is offering. So it also says to me there's been a bit of a progression in modern theological thinking that has gone beyond this point, hasn't it?

[RK]: I must admit that there is. It may not be at the level of the top scholars or theologians, but those that consider themselves the defenders of the faith, the apologists, the anti-cult people, the witch hunters, the heresy hunters-I dare not generalize, but I have enough direct experience to know that many are not as careful as Griffith Thomas was. They're quite comfortable with using the word without much definition, without much caution. We appreciate both the Spirit and the substance. Griffith Thomas's writing on this point. It's okay to use the word. We have to use some kind of human language to convey the truth, but let us please recognize the inherent limitation of terms such as "person" and not press them too far. It is my honest conviction that this term has, in fact, been pressed too far, too far, and has created unnecessary misunderstanding and strife among genuine children of God.

[CW]: Ron, time won't allow us today to go back to Witness Lee for our third segment, but I think the point that we were going to hear is still we can touch it in a couple of minutes in a brief way, back to chapter two of First John, that passage 24 to 27. John makes an interesting point here. He says, "As for you, that which you heard from the beginning, let it abide in you. If that which you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father." So there, the context is clear. We're talking about the Son and the Father, but in 25 and 27 there are the singular pronouns He and Him use to identify the two. In 27, I'll read it. It says, "And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you,.." The Him there seems to cover both the Father and the Son, doesn't it, Ron?

[RK]: It has to, and this is the beauty of the divine revelation in verse 24. "you also will abide in the Son and in the Father." This is clear distinction, as we testified earlier. Verse 25, and this is the promise which He himself promised. To whom does He refer? It must refer back to verse 24, and it must include both the Son and the Father. The same is true in verse 27. The anointing which you have received from Him, His anointing teaches you, abide in Him. What is the referent for these pronouns? Again, it's the Father and the Son in verse 24. Here we have in miniature a revelation of the three-one, one-three triune God, one God, who is eternally Father, Son, and Spirit. From the standpoint of distinction, we abide in the Father and in the Son. From the standpoint of oneness, He, He, the one God who is the Son and the Father and also the Spirit, promised us eternal life. We have received from Him this one God. His anointing, the anointing of this one God. We abide in Him. This is a very fair reading of the verses. Actually, it's not only fair; it's a necessary understanding. John knew what he was saying. He knew what he was doing. He was writing under tremendous light, directly from God concerning the

Godhead and the Divine Trinity; he was living in fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. As he was writing this, he knew God inwardly. He knew God by revelation, and that is why he could write in this simple yet mysterious way, on the one hand speaking of abiding in the Son and in the Father, distinction; on the other hand, saying He Himself promised oneness. This once again is the revelation of the Triune God in its balanced, complete way-a revelation, by the way, given not for theological speculation, but for spiritual experience in the divine life. Which experience and which life build up the Body of Christ as the goal of the operation of the Triune God in God's economy.

[CW]: That's it for today for Ron Kangas, I'm Chris Wilde. Thank you very much for listening.