



Recently, I watched the movie “Hidden Figures” with one of my daughters. That movie is about women who are black who were involved in mathematical calculations – getting the first spacecraft to space and to orbit the earth. It’s a fascinating story, from multiple angles, but I want to focus on the aspect of the plans that had to be made in order to get to space. They had to figure out what the rocket had to be made out of in order to endure atmospheric pressure. They sent many rockets up that simply exploded under the heat. Then, there was a great mystery: once the space entered into orbit, how could the ship stop orbiting earth and enter into the atmosphere? As they expressed it in the movie, this was a mathematical problem that hadn’t been solved by them yet. They didn’t know how it could be done. But eventually it was figured out, and John Glenn made it up to space, orbited the earth multiple times, and came back to earth’s surface.

The reason I give this illustration is because the main idea of the sermon today is **Whoever wants to do God’s will must know specific realities**. The reason I word it as “whoever wants to do God’s will” is because that’s what verse 17 states about us as Christians. We who do the will of God will live forever! Well, if it’s true that all Christians will grow in doing God’s will and we will live forever, *then* we also must live in that reality. Now, let me explain this a little more because that statement might not make sense right now; so, let me explain it a little more. Like NASA had to figure out the realities that faced the astronaut going to space and coming back; so, John in 1 John is speaking to Christians, telling them to know the realities that we face. If John Glenn was to be successful, not only did he have to be a good astronaut. He needed people to study realities, tell them those realities, and he needed to trust those realities in order to make it back alive. So it is with those of us who are followers of Jesus. God has given us his truth, and in his truth, he tells us what we face and what we need to be aware of. In the verses we’re looking at today, John emphasizes those realities all the more.

Up to this point in the letter of 1 John, John has sought to encourage the church that is being attacked from within by false teachers. There are people who seem to think that you can live in sin and be in good fellowship with the Lord. John has been both confronting that teaching, while also comforting the Christians. No, we are not perfect, but knowing Jesus does change our lives! Once we enter into chapter 2, John reveals three different consequences that come as a result of living in fellowship with the Lord: **1) our morals**/the way we live our life changes, **2) our standing** changes (meaning, we’re no longer ultimately defined as sinners, but we’re children of God), and **3) our knowledge** changes (we know the truth).

Today, we’ll focus on the third point. There’s certain knowledge we need to know. In verses 18-21, John emphasizes that we need to know the times, know the “antichrists,” and know our privileges in Jesus. If I go back to the example of the movie “Hidden Figures,” let me talk about John Glenn. He had to know that when he was in the space rocket, going up to orbit, he needed to behave differently than if he were on earth’s surface. There’s a knowledge of the “times.” Also, John Glenn wasn’t just a random citizen

getting into a rocket. Nor was he just any astronaut. He was specifically chosen. He knew the privileges he had as NASA's astronaut going to space. In addition, Glenn knew who to trust. If someone outside of his team made recommendations, he probably wouldn't listen to them. He listened to the people who devoted their time and energy to his success.

This is the realities for us as Christians. John calls us to listen to those who speak truth. He calls us to know the times we live in – and how that affects our behavior. He reminds us of our glorious privileges in Jesus. But at this point, I want to emphasize something: John Glenn was chosen because of his amazing abilities, that's different for us as Christians. The apostle John emphasizes in chapter 1 and early in chapter 2 that we still sin. But, God is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse those who trust Jesus. So, because of God's great love towards us, we grow in loving him. Because of his love, our morals change. Because of his love, we have a standing of being God's children. Because of his love, our knowledge is conformed to him. So, **Whoever wants to do God's will must know specific realities.** Let's dive deeper into these realities by looking at 1 John 2:18-21.

1. Know the times (v. 18a).

The beginning of verse 18 says, "Children, it is the last hour. . ."¹ Again, notice how John starts the verse. He calls his readers "children." This is not a mocking term. This is a term of affection and love. John, who was probably around 90 years old at the writing of this letter. John, who never got over the fact that Jesus loved him and called him by the term "children," is now using this term towards the readers! They, too, are part of God's family; so, these commands that John give here are based in the love of Jesus.

Now, because they're children, John calls them to recognize the times in which they live. They live in the "last hour." What does that mean? It sounds apocalyptic, right? Well, it is. But some of us might read that and say, "If 2,000 years ago was the last hour, then John was way off!" But that's not true. The Bible often spoke of the last days, hours and times. Sometimes, when talking about the last days, it's referencing the final, final days immediately coming before Jesus' return. Other times, it's referencing a long period of time between Jesus' ascension to Heaven and his return. Which do you think John is referring to here? He's referring to the big time period. Jesus ascended to heaven about 60 years before the writing of this letter. Jesus is coming again. We live in the "last hour."

Go back to the end of verse 8 in this chapter. It perfectly describes this time period we live in right now: the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.² Because Jesus came to this earth, died on the cross, rose again and has been saving sinners for 2,000 years; the darkness is passing away. It's dying. This means that darkness is still here. This also can mean that darkness can at times and seasons look like it's winning. But Jesus conquered death and sin! So, Jesus' light shines even in this world. We live in a time period of "already-not-yet." There's already blessings of future glory to come. But we don't yet experience it in the fulness. We must always keep this in mind. Some professing Christians speak as though this life is perfect, and we should just live for the here-and-now, but this world is still broken! If we live only for right now, we'll miss God's intentions for us. That's why John emphasizes that we need to know we live in the "last hour."

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 2:18.

² [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 2:8.

How does that shape how we live? Well, in this time period, the apostle Peter states in one of his letters that God is patient, not willing that any should die and go to Hell, but that all should turn from their sins and trust Jesus. One of the reasons this “last hour” is so long is because God is calling people from around the globe to trust Jesus as their Savior and King. We should share this good news with other people and share Christ’s love with others. To add to this, Paul tells us in his teachings that God doesn’t just take Christians immediately to Heaven because God intends to grow us in our dependence on him and our obedience in this world.

And, isn’t this what John is emphasizing in this letter? People were in the church, trying to convince the Christians that obeying God didn’t matter. But living in the “last hour” should compel Christians all the more to follow Jesus and show his ways to the watching world!

Ventura, never forget we’re in the “last hour.” We are to live on mission now! But I know the struggle. We might mentally know that Jesus could come any time, but the reality is that he didn’t come the last 2,000 years. So, our tendency is to say, “Let’s just sit back and settle down.” But, let’s think of it another way. When I was a father of one child, people would tell Tracy and me that we need to savor the moments because time goes so fast. Honestly, I didn’t believe them. Isaiah was little. Everyday was an adventure and there was a lot of stress and anxieties. With each subsequent child, more difficulties. Days felt very long. But then, Isaiah was 6, Samuel was 4, Elisha was 2. We’d have Elyse and then Karis. By that time, our other children were 8, 6, 4, and 2. The days felt slow, but the years seemed to go by so fast. Now, I have a son who has a summer internship and is going to Davenport in the Fall, and I have two sons with their own cars now.

How did this happen? And you know what? When people older than I hear this, they then say, “It’s going to go even faster.” Now I believe them. But what’s my point in saying this? My point is that when we make it to the end of our lives, we’ll say, “It went so fast.” When we get to the end of our lives, do you think you’ll say, “I wish I wouldn’t have given so much to Jesus”? Never. You’ll probably wish you had shined his light even more. I don’t say this to make you feel false guilt or shame. I say these things to compel us. Open our eyes. Live in reality! We are in the “last hour.” Don’t waste your days only living for yourself and other trinkets of this world. Live in the glorious reality that if you’ve trusted Jesus, you’re God’s child and you have the privilege to live in the time period before his next return! So, take obedience seriously.

2. Know the “antichrists” (vv. 18-19).

Let’s read verses 18-19 again: ¹⁸Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.³

What is an “antichrist?” It can refer to someone who is verbally against Jesus. In verse 22, John says that someone who denies Jesus is the Christ is an antichrist. That’s blatant, right? But John goes on to challenge his readers to not be deceived. To be deceived means something isn’t so blatant. This Greek prefix for “anti” can include a broad understanding of being explicitly against something, but it can also be translated “instead of.” In other words, an antichrist is someone who outright denies Jesus is the rescuer and Savior of the cosmos. Or, it’s someone who replaces Jesus with other things. They might talk

³ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 2:18–19.

about Jesus, but they also emphasize other things as maybe just as valuable. It makes me think of some other so-called Christian religions that might say that Jesus took the punishment for most of our sins, but didn't cover all; so, you have to ensure you do enough. In practice, this has been much of Catholicism's teaching. Therefore, you have to go to purgatory to be cleansed – as though Jesus isn't sufficient. Other people might say things like, "I believe in Jesus," but in practice, they live for everything else.

An "antichrist" can take on various forms. But notice something. First, John emphasizes that there's going to be one antichrist. And then he also says there are many antichrists. This fits with the Bible's teaching. In the last, last hour. There will be one final antichrist. One that Revelation, and other portions of Scripture talks about. He will be the great deceiver. He'll be so deceptive that Jesus says if it were possible, even Christians would be deceived. Thankfully, it's not possible because of God's grace! So, there's one antichrist to come in the last, last hour. But in this general last hour, there are many antichrists. John states that this proves we're in the last hour.

At this point, you could say, "How do I know if someone is an antichrist? They sound scary. I don't want to be duped!" Well, instead of John focusing on what they say, he focuses on what they do. Look at verse 19 again: ¹⁹They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.⁴ The phrase "went out" is the same phrased used of Judas Iscariot – the first "antichrist." He went out from Jesus' presence on his way to betray the Savior. John says that we can tell an antichrist if they leave Christians behind.

I want to be careful here, though. Sometimes local churches can use this verse in very sinful ways. There could be a tension within the church, or someone could leave a church because of certain biblical convictions that aren't heretical, and church leadership or the congregation could say, "Well, they left us because they weren't of us." That's wrong. Leaving a local church isn't necessarily a sign of abandoning the faith. Keep in mind that this letter of John is understood as a "universal" letter. John is writing to Christians. Yes, these Christians gather together in local groups, but he's writing universally. My point is that antichrists try to leave behind Christians to make their own group. They might leave a local church, and then they try to gain their own following because the church didn't listen to them.

Honestly, we had this happen here years ago. Sadly, some of you remember this. We had a couple come in. We were enjoying their company. Tracy and I had them over. I enjoyed meeting with them, and then the wife started meeting with people about "new truths" she was discovering. They were teaching that humans weren't born sinful and that we can be perfect in this life, along with other things. What did we do? Well, I reached out to them. I asked them to meet and we'd have just the Bible before us. I also asked the church to not talk to them until they're willing to talk to me. They never responded, and they left. As far as I can tell, they went out from us because they weren't of us. Meaning, they gave no evidence of being Christians.

This reminds me of another man in the church I grew up in. He was passionate about God. He loved studying theology. I remember my dad getting to know him. But then, things got weird. He went down rabbit holes in theology, and began separating from people who didn't agree with him. And eventually, it seemed like he could only agree with himself, so he ostracized himself from others. Is theology to ostracize us from God's children? No! Will we all agree on everything? No. But did God save me and save

⁴ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Biv. les, 2016), 1 Jn 2:19.

you by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone? If so, we are unified, and we are commanded to be eager to maintain the unity of the faith in the bond of peace. Anyone who can walk away from believers is giving scary evidences that they may not be a Christian at all.

But, having said this, listen carefully now because there's encouragement in these words. Christians will persevere with Christians. If you're afraid you're going to give up the faith – these words say otherwise. The reason people give up with Christians is because they never were one to begin with. But if you're a believer, you'll persevere. You'll stay with God's people until your dying day.

So, Ventura, know the times. Know that "antichrists" exist. Be on alert. Follow God faithfully in the midst of this. And finally,

3. **Know your privileges in Jesus (vv. 20-21).**

²⁰ But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. ²¹ I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.⁵

In all of this, we could tend to be a little scared. I remember when I was a kid and people would talk about Jesus coming again, and many times they'd talk about it with a lot of fear. I mean, I get it because the Bible describes the last, last days in fearful terms. But are the last, last days fearful for Christians? No! Jesus is coming again. Jesus describes the last days in terms of a woman in labor. So, as we look over the last 2,000 years, we see time periods where there was more pain and difficulties, and other times where there is more relief. As the time moves on, the pains increase until we get to the final one. And what happens with the final one? Yes, it's painful. Yes, it's going to be difficult in many ways. Read Daniel, Revelation, Isaiah. But what is going to happen after the final labor pain? Jesus's Second Coming!

Now, as a Christian, is that good or bad? It's glorious! Every labor pain is an evidence that we're closer to Jesus' return. And, if we're still on this earth, God is taking care of his children. And John is comforting the Christians in the midst of the difficulties they're facing. He states privileges they have so they shouldn't be afraid. What are these privileges?

You're anointed by Jesus. Why do I say Jesus? John says the "Holy One." The only other place this phrase shows up is in Mark 1, where Jesus is referred to as the "Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24). But what does it mean to be anointed by Jesus? This word for anointing doesn't emphasize so much the act of anointing but it refers to what makes you anointed. Let me explain. In all but one case in the NT, to be anointed refers to being anointed with the Holy Spirit. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit. Paul was anointed with the Holy Spirit. Jesus states to his disciples that when he left and ascended to Heaven, the Spirit would come with power and comfort over them! And John says here that it's not just the original disciples who have the Spirit, but everyone who trusts Jesus. William Tyndale, the first man to translate the Bible in English and was later strangled and burned at the stake in the 1500's for his "heresy" of believing Jesus alone saves and for translating the Bible in the common language. He wrote this regarding John's words here: **Ye are not anointed with oil in your bodies, but with the Spirit of Christ in your souls: which Spirit teacheth you all truth in Christ, and maketh you to judge what is a lie, and what truth, and to know Christ from antichrist** (as quot in Stott, John in *The Letters of John*, p. 110).

⁵ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 2:20–21.

Christian, listen carefully, you have the Spirit of God at work in you! Do you know that? You've been anointed by God the Son, Jesus, with God the Spirit! Are we privileged? Are we blessed? What does it mean that we have the Spirit at work in us? I remember years ago reading in a book by Francis Chan on the Holy Spirit. He asked us to imagine if a basketball player said he had God working in him to play basketball. If that were true, what would you expect of the basketball player? He would play basketball really well, right?

John is encouraging us to say, "You have the Spirit of God in you to follow and obey God and to resist the temptations of the antichrists!" Does this mean we're sinless? No. John already said that if we say we have no sin, we're a liar. But John also says that we confess our sins. We grow in fighting against them and growing in obedience! We have the Spirit at work in us. We've been anointed by Jesus. Know this privilege. This shapes how you will live. We don't live in fear, but with hope! The next blessing is that

You have the necessary knowledge. The point I believe John is making here is that everyone who has trusted in Jesus has the knowledge necessary to grow in our relationship with God and grow in following him in this life. What is that necessary knowledge? It's what John started this letter with. It's the good news of Jesus and about Jesus. It's the news that Jesus came into this world to save sinners – and we couldn't save ourselves. It's the news that every person must face the Just Judge of the Universe. He will judge everyone. Every single person, including you. You will face him. Now, the question is, will he judge you on the basis of you or on the basis of someone else who took the place of sinners? If he judges you on the basis of you, you know you'll be guilty. But Jesus came in order to take our place! He took the guilt. He took the shame. He took the sin. And on the cross, he bore God's just punishment for sinners! Do you understand this love and mercy? This isn't anything you have done. It's all on Jesus. And, through trusting Jesus alone, many people here now have confidence we'll be with God for all eternity.

This is the necessary knowledge. It's the knowledge that Jesus is central. Or, like Paul says, we behold the glory of God in Jesus. Or, elsewhere says that he determines to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. This is the essential knowledge. Ventura, we must always keep the main thing the main thing or we will lose sight of how to live in these last hours. But we have the necessary knowledge. You don't have to have a seminary or college or even high school degree to know this! We need to know Jesus and help each other to grow in knowing Jesus more and more.

God's glory in Jesus by the power of the Spirit is the necessary knowledge. And God has given us this! How does this then practically apply? Well, John says that no lie is of the truth. Have you ever been confused by something that sounded true, but you just knew it wasn't right? Have you ever been in a conversation with someone and they recount events that you know aren't correct, but they're so confident, you think you're wrong? Have you ever been gaslit? Well, this is how people in this world can be. This is how "antichrists" can act and behave. John centers us back on the gospel and calls us to not necessarily evaluate what others are saying or what their confidence level is. He tells us to go back to Jesus and cling to him. Whatever distracts from or is outright against Jesus, is not from the truth.

Oh, how blessed we are as Christians. **Whoever wants to do God's will must know specific realities. If we know the times, the antichrists, and our privileges, we can live in these last hours with hope. We can face the antichrists because we have the Spirit and we have the message of the gospel faithfully recorded in the Bible! We will endure because we are God's dearly loved children.**