

## Doctrine of Christ

2 John 9-11

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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

### I. Introduction:

Turn in your bibles to the book of 2 John as today we will examine 3 verses that are familiar to many of you – verses 9-11. The title of today’s message is the “Doctrine of Christ.” That, the doctrine of Christ, describes what is consistently preached from this pulpit here at Eager Avenue Grace Church – God’s Gospel – the doctrine or body of truth pertaining to how sinners are saved based solely on the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ – the doctrine of Christ. And in these 3 verses we will see that those who belong to God, His people, are uniquely identified by their having embraced this doctrine, this specific body of truth referred to in 2 John as “the doctrine of Christ.”

### II. 2 John 9: There, in 2 John, verse 9, we read: ***“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”***

A. Now this is pretty clear language is it not? It sets up a dichotomy. That is, either you are among those of whom it can be said that you “hath not God” or else you are among those of whom it is said that they “hath both the Father and the Son” – no in between, either one or the other and so you are either abiding in the doctrine of Christ or you are not abiding in the doctrine of Christ. And that’s why it is important for us to clearly understand this evidence cited here identifying these 2 groups – those who either “hath God” or “hath not God,” – for this ultimately describes the saved or the lost – those who shall either inhabit heaven’s glory or hell’s misery. So given what is at stake here, this subject should warrant our undivided attention.

B. Those who hath God (who hath both the Father and the Son) are the blessed objects of God’s grace, those who in time are given the blood-bought gift of faith whereby they come to know The Lord Jesus Christ and the great salvation that He fully accomplished for them. They come to know and love the doctrine of Christ. And for those who have this revelation of God-given faith, no other doctrine, no other way of salvation, no other gospel will do for them. By faith, they embrace the doctrine of Christ, the one way of salvation in and by Christ alone – a way that uniquely fits their desperate need, so perfectly that (1) nothing less will do for them and (2) nothing more is needed – No less and no more!

III. The Doctrine of Christ: If we are to discern whether we are among those who hath God (both the Father and the Son) as our God and Savior, then it is imperative that we understand the vital body of truth referred to here as “the doctrine of Christ.” The word, “doctrine” is most simply defined as a body of knowledge that has been taught. And since not all that is taught is true or accurate, then obviously there is true doctrine and there is false doctrine. Now God’s people measure the validity of their doctrine by the absolute standard of truth – God’s Holy word. And there is where we find the specific, glorious truth of the Gospel – the doctrine of Christ.

There are 2 perspectives from which we might understand this phrase, “the doctrine of Christ.”

1) First, it certainly can be applied to that which Christ Himself taught in His earthly ministry – hence the teaching or doctrine of Christ. 2) Secondly, it can just as accurately be understood to be the teaching or doctrine found in God’s Word concerning Christ – again, the doctrine of Christ. And both of these perspectives are compatible with one another and in no way contradictory. The entire bible is the story of redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ who taught of Himself in John 14:6, ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*** Salvation is by Christ alone and the doctrine of Christ is that body of truth both taught by Christ and concerning Christ – for they are one and the same. It is the truth of the gospel – of the good news of how sinners are saved by the Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ and that alone – nothing added, nothing taken away. So this body of truth sets forth 2 things: 1) Who He is and 2) What He (and He alone) accomplished:

A. His Person: First who is He? He is the God-man. He is both fully God and fully man.

1. As Paul confirmed to Timothy in the first part of I Timothy 3:16: ***“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh,...”*** (I Timothy 3:16a). He’s the God-man.
2. We read in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of Matthew how when Mary and Joseph were engaged to be married, they found that she was expecting a child, described as that “holy thing” who had been miraculously conceived by God the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. And as we get to verse 19 of Matthew 1, we read, ***“Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. <sup>20</sup>But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. <sup>21</sup>And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. <The word Jesus means, “Jehovah, God who saves” <sup>22</sup>Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, <sup>23</sup>Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Truly, He was both God and man and any who deny this, abide not in the doctrine of Christ – the truth concerning who He is.***

B. His Work: But this doctrine of Christ also includes His work – that which He accomplished (as one uniquely qualified to do so as both God and sinless man) – that which He accomplished by His obedience unto death on the cross. That’s why He took into union with his Deity a sinless humanity – to accomplish the salvation of His people.

1. So in Matthew 1, not only is His Person described, but also that which He came to accomplish, His saving work. While it declares that He is indeed Jehovah God, more specifically we see why His name was to be called Jesus (Jehovah God who saves). It was because He would save his people from their sins. As Paul wrote, Christ came into the world to save sinners – not to try and save sinners – but to actually save them. And as God, there was no possibility of Christ failing to accomplish that which He came to do for even one of those given to Him by the Father.
2. We also see how the doctrine of Christ pertains both to His Person and work in Paul’s writing to the believers at Galatia where we read, beginning in Galatians 4:4, “***But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, <Deity> made of a woman, <humanity> made under the law, <to accomplish something> <sup>5</sup>To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.***” He was God, God’s only begotten Son – eternal, uncreated Deity. And yet a body was prepared for Him as it reads, He was “made of a woman.” The God-man. And here also we see the work He came to accomplish – how He would (not merely attempt, but would) save His people from their sins. Indeed, Christ took on their nature, body and soul, made like unto us in every way, yet without sin – that being the only distinction between His humanity and all of fallen humanity, Adam’s natural descendants, those born of man’s seed, fallen in sin in their federal head and father, Adam.
3. So Christ took into union with His Deity, a sinless humanity (body and soul) that He might walk in their place, under the same jurisdiction, being made under the same law and so subject to God’s same holy requirement of perfect, continual obedience to His law, His revealed will – that which is justly commanded by the sovereign God and Creator of this universe. And Christ, acting in the place of His people, as their Substitute, did for them what these chosen sinners could not possibly do for themselves. He fulfilled that law for them by His perfect obedience all the way to His death on the cross. And these for whom Christ rendered this perfect obedience were still no less ungodly sinners, law breakers, in and of themselves. And so Christ not only obeyed the law’s precepts for them, but He also paid the penalty due unto God’s justice because of their sins – God having laid the guilt of the sins of His adopted children on His own precious Son who alone could (and who did some 2000 years) ago pay the penalty due unto the travesty of their sins demanded by the immutable justice of an infinitely holy God. He endured the just wrath of God due unto their sin by His substitutionary death on the cross, His blood payment. He redeemed them!

4. Always remember that redemption does not speak of a mere attempt made but rather of a price paid – and that in full. This God-man, the Lord of glory, shed His own precious blood to fully pay the debt due unto God’s holy justice – the debt due for the demerit of all the sins of all those given to Him by the Father. He redeemed them. And as 2 Corinthians 5:21 teaches us, God made Him (who was perfectly sinless in Himself) to be sin for us (imputing or charging the demerit of the sins of His people to Christ so that by His blood payment He might perfectly satisfy the just penalty due unto their sins). Likewise, as that same verse teaches, God has imputed or charged to all these for whom Christ died, (the redeemed ones) the very merit of His perfect obedience, even unto death. They have a double cure – as the old hymn writer put it, saved from wrath and made pure – God’s wrath against their sins poured out on His dear Son (saved from wrath) and God imputed (or put to their account) the very merit of His perfect, holy obedience which he rendered as their Substitute (and so they are made pure). They have His perfect satisfaction to justice (His righteousness) imputed or accounted unto them so that they might stand accepted in Him and so blameless, not guilty, without spot or blemish before a holy God. His righteousness is made theirs!

C. Now that is the doctrine of Christ – simply who He is and what He has done (according) to God’s word to save His people. Now we know that the ultimate standard of truth is God, not us. So if we are to judge whether or not we abide in the doctrine of Christ – we should ask ourselves, Do we see that Christ truly accomplished what God tells us He was sent to accomplish did accomplish. Either He truly saved His people from their sins by His obedience unto death on the cross or else He didn’t. Christ fully met all the requirements or conditions for the salvation of His people and as such, their salvation is not in any way or to any degree pending some remaining condition which they must meet. So according to the doctrine of Christ, Christ did it all and He did not fail to save even one of those for whom He died. His death got the job done. When He cried out on the cross, “It is finished,” it truly was! He has saved His people from their sins.

IV. 2 John 10: Now we see more of the seriousness of our treatment of this subject (the doctrine of Christ) when we look at the next 2 verses of our text, 2 John, verses 10 and 11. Beginning again back in verse 9 we read: “***Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.*** <Now look how the seriousness of this is amplified by the verses that follow where John continues writing...> <sup>10</sup>***If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house,*** <and I believe that is speaking of any house of worship for in that day they would meet to worship in houses> ***neither bid him God speed: <sup>11</sup>For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.***” Here God’s Word asserts that if someone attempts to teach doctrine to us other than “this” specific doctrine of Christ, we are not to encourage their ministry in any way – not if it is based upon a false doctrine – any doctrine contrary to the Gospel – the vital doctrine of Christ and the truth it sets forth of salvation having been fully accomplished by Christ’s finished work.

We are not to encourage the success of their ministries or give them comfort in their false religion by behaving toward them in a way that might lend credence to their false, God-dishonoring teachings. And God declares here that to do so, is to partake of their evil deeds. To do so perhaps exposes that one isn't yet fully convinced that Christ is the way – as in the only way. That equates to not abiding in the doctrine of Christ as we see that to so compromise this vital truth is to partake of their evil and thereby to be identified with those God declares to not have Him as their God. This unambiguous language that delineates the very eternal destiny of our souls (heaven or hell) should cause us to examine ourselves. Do you / do I fit the description of these who hath God (both the Father and the Son) or these who hath not God?

V. Well, let's look a little closer at the language found here in 2 John. Note again that verse 9 describes those who hath not God as “***Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ,...***”

A. Whosoever: First, note it begins with “whosoever.” That means everyone who transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ – no exceptions. No matter how sincere or well-intentioned they might be.

B. Transgresseth: Secondly, and more specifically it says whosoever transgresseth the doctrine of Christ.

1. Now the word translated “transgression” is one of the 5 Greek words in the New Testament used to describe sin. The word is often used in conjunction with the word, “law” as the Bible describes sin to be a transgression of the law – a breaking of God's law. But in its context here in 2 John it is describing those who transgress the doctrine of Christ. God's word declares that all have sinned and so all transgress God's law or revealed will and that continually whether in thought, word or deed. So if we interpreted “transgresseth” in this context to mean sinneth as in any sin, that would mean that no one could be said to “have God,” contradictory to the truth that God has a people and that He is their God.
2. The word “transgress” means to go beyond or overstep the boundary. Just as the word translated ‘trespasses’ is used to describe sin, the word “transgression” also carries a similar connotation of stepping beyond a line, as when someone trespasses on your property by crossing over the property's boundary line. So to transgress in the context of 2 John, 9 means to go outside of the boundary of the doctrine of Christ, God's simple Gospel – referred to by our Lord as that strait and narrow way that leads to eternal life. So those who transgress the doctrine of Christ are those who deny the gospel whether by subtracting from it or by adding to it. It is to go beyond the simplicity of Christ.

3. The Simplicity of Christ: Paul wrote of that in 2 Corinthians 11 where, beginning in verse 3 we read, *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.<sup>4</sup> For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.”* That “well bear with him” is either spoken rhetorically and in dismay as in “You will bear with him?” or else, as some believe, it should be interpreted that you should bear with me since the “him” is in italics, denoting that the word was added by the translators.

(a) Regardless, that phrase “the simplicity that is in Christ” refers to the singleness of Christ – nothing to be subtracted, nothing to be added. Salvation is not a product of Christ plus something you do to make His work effectual – not your profession of faith, not your having invited Him into your heart, not your decision to receive Him, etc. The gift of faith is not something that is only made effectual if you, unlike others will unwrap it or receive it. Granted, all of God’s people will receive the truth revealed by faith, but it’s not genuine, God-given faith and it would not be believing that salvation is by grace if your unwrapping or receiving what others would not unwrap or receive is that which you tragically presume makes the real difference in your salvation. That would be more aptly called “the doctrine of man,” not “the doctrine of Christ.”

(b) In reality that doctrine exposes that Christ isn’t really your savior. Rather it exposes that your savior is your response. That’s faith in faith, not faith in Christ. Whoever or whatever does the saving – that’s your savior. So to the those so deceived into believing that Christ merely made salvation possible, know this: That’s not Christ, the Savior, but rather “another Jesus.” That’s not the simplicity of Christ, the singleness of salvation by Christ alone. No, the doctrine of Christ sets forth that Christ single handedly and completely saved His people from their sins. And so to suggest that even one for whom Christ died could perish in unbelief (as so many are deceived into believing) is to be trusting in a failure, a counterfeit – “another Jesus.”

C. Abiding or Abiding Not: Now let’s consider in more depth what it means to “abide” or to “not abide” in the doctrine of Christ:

1. To abide in something simply means to continue in it. So those who abide in the doctrine of Christ have found their certain hope for salvation in Christ – for He alone answers their desperate need for God’s mercy and grace. They see both their need along with a sure and certain solution to that need as God has so graciously revealed that to them through the preaching of this body of truth, God’s Gospel – the doctrine of Christ. And one so convinced by God the Holy Spirit is one who abideth – they cannot be moved.

2. Now due to remaining sin they will be tempted to compromise the doctrine of Christ. At times their zeal for the Gospel may wane and at other times they will have sinful doubts. They won't always have a ready answer for the counter charges of others still steeped in their former false religion, particularly when in their spiritual infancy. And at times they will be mistaken over the interpretation of this scripture or that one and so in error over non-vital points of doctrine. But they will readily repent of error when exposed, particularly if it runs counter to the simplicity of Christ – the simple but vital doctrine of salvation in and by the Lord Jesus Christ alone. So in spite of remaining sin, God's people will ultimately abide in the doctrine of Christ. God keeps them and of these given to Christ by God the Father, He said He would lose none of them.
3. So the basis of their hope, the ground of their salvation, will never change once God has given them spiritual life and the knowledge of Him in Christ so as to see Christ as all of their salvation. They find their complete acceptance before God in Christ their Savior and that for all eternity, all based upon His imputed, everlasting righteousness – nothing more, nothing less! Listen – if (1) anything else will do for you or (2) if anything more is needful for your salvation – then you are not yet abiding in the doctrine of Christ, but rather transgressing or going outside of the simplicity (or singleness) of Christ.

VI. Practical examples: Now before we close, let's consider some various ways in which folks may manifest that they are transgressing and abiding not in the doctrine of Christ:

- A. Non-Christian religions: First, those who embrace the many non-Christian religions which make no pretense of believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, certainly cannot be said to be abiding in the doctrine of Christ and of these our God declares they hath not God.
- B. The Indifferent: Secondly, consider that many, perhaps even most are indifferent about religion. Some oppose any and all religion but many more are just indifferent. At this time it just must not be worth them taking the time to seriously try to understand the true doctrine of Christ. Well, clearly, for any who are either ignorant of the doctrine of Christ (God's Gospel) and / or who are indifferent toward it, it certainly cannot be said of them that they are abiding in it. But this is serious for God likewise says that these hath not God.
- C. Christian in name only: Thirdly, and moving up the scale of greater degrees of deceptive subtlety, we have those who profess to be of the "Christian" faith – profess to believe on Christ and yet deny the clear teaching of Christ – the true doctrine of Christ, who He is and what He has actually accomplished. Sadly, in our day this describes most who call themselves "Christians." Granted there are doctrinal variations among them but perhaps the most prevalent is the popular teaching that God loves everyone and Christ died for everyone. Hopefully today, you've already seen how that by default, those notions will have us trusting in something other than or in addition to Christ to make the real difference for they imagine that Christ did no more for those who go to heaven than He did for those who go to hell. Tragically, these transgress and abide not in the doctrine of Christ. They hath not God.

#### D. Compromising Calvinists:

Fourthly, and a bit even more subtle are those who may adhere to what is called Calvinistic doctrine. I'm referring to those who do correctly understand the clear scriptural truth that Christ did not die for all but rather that He lived and died for a particular people – God's elect in Christ. Sadly it appears that even the majority of those wearing that label do not abide in the doctrine of Christ as evidenced by their receiving and bidding others God speed – others who openly deny the very doctrine they claim to believe. As we learn from 2 John, verses 10 and 11, by bidding them God-speed in their false doctrine, they thereby partake of their evil deeds and expose that in spite of their professed orthodoxy concerning this important doctrinal truth, there has been no heart work.

We read of such in 2 Thessalonians 2:9 and 10 where Paul is warning us to beware of false teachers and he describes them by saying, ***“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, <sup>10</sup>And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”*** This describes those who have not been given a new heart so as to engender a love of the truth whereby they see the doctrine of Christ as far more than some mere deeper intellectual understanding or advanced learning. But all who are given a new heart and an accompanying love of the truth shall all ultimately abide in the doctrine of Christ. Out of love for their lost friends and relatives, they no longer dare encourage them in their false and deadly way – a way of which they have repented, having seen how their false doctrine denies the very Person and redeeming work of their dear Savior.

#### E. Transformers:

1. And then perhaps the most subtle of all are those who in times past (perhaps even with some degree of consistency) have preached the true gospel of God's grace. No doubt they have head knowledge of the truth. And for a time, they actually appear to be abiding in the doctrine of Christ – but ultimately they are exposed when, despite all their former assertions to the contrary – they transgress the boundary of the doctrine of Christ. These wolves have on the most authentic looking sheep costumes of all. But thankfully God keeps His people and ultimately exposes their deception to us.
2. Had we continued our reading in 2 Corinthians 11 where Paul was warning of false teachers who would corrupt the simplicity that is in Christ, when we had gotten down to verse 13 we would have read these words, ***“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. <sup>15</sup>Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”***



They are transformers in that they appear to be ministers of righteousness as they can at times (perhaps even often) preach the very righteousness of God in Christ that Paul said is revealed in the true Gospel. There are 2 ways by which their deceit is exposed. They either (1) add to or (2) take away from the simplicity of Christ and God's Gospel – the doctrine of Christ. They transgress or go outside of the simple Gospel.

3. Some will modify their message depending upon their audience in an apparent attempt to maintain a larger following. So they transgress the doctrine of Christ by subtracting from it, often times not by what they say, but by what they do not say – speaking in generalities so that their hearers may conveniently apply their own preconceived understanding to what is being said. Clearly, such are not abiding in the doctrine of Christ. They transgress by subtraction as they intentionally mask or keep under wraps the clear Gospel message of salvation by Christ – based upon His Person and work alone.
4. Others will at some point transgress the doctrine of Christ by adding to it some new teaching that they've come to adopt and treat it as if it is a vital evidence of one with a saving knowledge (at least vital for their hearers, though strangely they may not apply that same standard to themselves before being so “enlightened”). And they promote as vital that which is non-vital by illogically linking it to that which true believers know to be vital, suggesting that a failure to concur with their new discovery is tantamount to denying what believers know to be true in their heart of hearts as revealed to them by God-given faith. Here's a way we might do well to test for this: They have transgressed the doctrine of Christ if their teaching would prompt you to look anywhere for salvation other than or in addition to Christ and Him crucified. Isn't that what Paul suggested when he wrote to the church at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 2:2 saying, ***“For I determined not to know not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”***
5. And then as some of you know, there are men in our day who in the past have preached Christ and Him crucified, pointing to His finished work of righteousness and that imputed to the sinner as the sole basis upon which God saves a sinner. And yet today, some have concluded that having the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ accounted unto them just isn't quite enough. They now insist that they must find a righteousness inherent within themselves. And since 2 Corinthians 5:21 teaches that God's people are made righteous in the same way and sense that Christ was made sin, with their flawed premise they go on to conclude that Christ then had to become a sinner inherently within Himself.

6. Such heresy denies the scripture that so clearly teaches us that Christ offered up Himself without spot. They deny the truth of Christ's sinless humanity – a denial that would actually disqualify Christ as the one who uniquely could do for us sinners what we couldn't do for ourselves. We need a Savior not another sinner. They deny His Person and so abide not in the doctrine of Christ. I pray that God will deliver men from this God dishonoring heresy!

## VII. Closing:

We know that sinners (such as all of us) are prone to error, but thankfully all of God's elect shall ultimately be brought back to abide in the simplicity of Christ – to abide in the doctrine of Christ – who He is and what He has accomplished. God's word declares that to be so.

Do you abide in the doctrine of Christ? I pray so for such hath both the Father and the Son.

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.