

2 John 1:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. John presents a stark contrast using his characteristic verb "abide" (Greek *menō*, *μένω*). "Whosoever transgresseth" (Greek *pas ho proagōn*, *πᾶς ὁ προάγων*) literally means "everyone going ahead" or "going beyond"—those who claim to advance past apostolic teaching. These progressives believe they have moved beyond primitive Christianity to superior understanding. John identifies such claims as transgression, not legitimate development.

To not "abide in the doctrine of Christ" (Greek *mē menōn en tē didachē tou Christou*, *μὴ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ*) means failing to remain steadfast in the teaching about Christ (objective genitive) or the teaching from Christ (subjective genitive)—likely both. Apostolic doctrine about Jesus' person and work, derived from His own teaching, forms Christianity's immovable foundation. Those who depart from it, regardless of their sophistication or sincerity, "hath not God"—they lack saving relationship with the Father.

Conversely, "he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." This stunning claim asserts that relationship with God depends on doctrinal orthodoxy. The verb "hath" (Greek *echei*, *ἔχει*) denotes possession or relationship. One cannot claim to know the Father while rejecting or revising the truth about the Son. Access to the Father comes exclusively through the Son (John

14:6), and knowledge of the Son depends on apostolic testimony. False doctrine doesn't merely indicate incomplete understanding—it demonstrates absence of saving knowledge of God. This makes theology not peripheral but absolutely vital to Christian faith.

Historical Context

First-century Gnostic teachers claimed they had moved beyond the elementary teachings of the apostles to advanced spiritual knowledge. They portrayed themselves as progressive intellectuals who transcended the crude doctrines of earlier Christianity. This appeal to sophistication and progress proved effective in drawing away some believers who desired to appear intellectually respectable or spiritually mature.

John's response is unequivocal: such "progress" is actually apostasy. True spiritual maturity involves deeper understanding of apostolic truth, not moving beyond it to novel teachings. The doctrine of Christ revealed in apostolic preaching is final, complete, and sufficient. Claimed revelations that contradict or supersede it are deceptions, not advances. The early church's struggle against Gnosticism would largely determine Christianity's future—would it maintain apostolic orthodoxy or drift into syncretism and speculation?

The assertion that possessing God depends on correct Christology was countercultural in the religiously pluralistic Roman Empire. Many ancient philosophies taught that sincere religious devotion—regardless of specific beliefs—pleased divinity. John insists Christianity cannot accommodate such latitudinarianism. Relationship with God is mediated through Christ alone, and knowledge of Christ depends on apostolic testimony. This exclusivism would characterize Christianity, distinguishing it from both pagan polytheism and modern religious pluralism.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What contemporary theological movements or ideas claim to "progress" beyond traditional Christian doctrine, and how should we evaluate them?
2. How can we distinguish between legitimate theological development (deeper understanding of truth) and doctrinal deviation (departure from truth)?
3. What practical implications follow from understanding that possessing God depends on abiding in the doctrine of Christ?

Interlinear Text

πᾶς	ό	παραβαίνων	καὶ	μὴ	μένων	ἐν	τῇ	
Whosoever	G3588	transgresseth	and	not	He that abideth	in	G3588	
G3956		G3845	G2532	G3361	G3306	G1722		
διδαχῇ	τοῦ	Χριστοῦ,	Θεὸν	οὐκ	ἔχει	ό	μένων	
the doctrine	G3588	of Christ	God	not	hath	G3588	He that abideth	
G1322		G5547	G2316	G3756	G2192	G3306		
ἐν	τῇ	διδαχῇ	τοῦ	Χριστοῦ,	οὗτος	καὶ	τὸν	πατέρα
in	G3588	the doctrine	G3588	of Christ	he	and	G3588	the Father
G1722		G1322		G5547	G3778	G2532		G3962
καὶ	τὸν	υἱὸν	ἔχει					
and	G3588	the Son	hath					
G2532		G5207	G2192					

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 3:16 (References Christ): Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Acts 2:42 (Parallel theme): And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

1 John 1:3 (References Christ): That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

John 14:6 (Parallel theme): Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 15:6 (Parallel theme): If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

Titus 2:10 (References God): Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

John 5:23 (Parallel theme): That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

Luke 10:22 (Parallel theme): All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.

Hebrews 3:14 (References Christ): For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

Hebrews 6:1 (References Christ): Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,