

Dear Saints,

I have been struck lately by both St. John and St. Paul saying that you do not need someone to teach you. It makes you wonder why they actually wrote their letters (epistles) that became Scripture.

In 1 John, John says, "I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it." (2:21) and "the anointing that you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as His anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in Him" (2:27)

The anointing that John refers to is the anointing of the Holy Spirit whom you received in your baptism. Without the Holy Spirit, you would not be able to believe. (1 Corinthians 2:14) And He teaches you through His Holy Word. (John 20:30-31; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul says, "Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another." (4:9) Paul is talking specifically about loving your brother or sister in Christ, but I find it interesting that he says that they have no need for anyone to write! Naturally, I wonder how then should I preach?

Obviously, John and Paul write and continue to write. This seems to contradict what they say, but I think it is helpful to understand that we all need reminded again and again of the love that God has for us in Christ. I believe we sorely underestimate the arrows of the devil, the influence of the world on our worldview, and the evilness of our old flesh.

St. Peter addresses the danger of the devil well in 1 Peter, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith." (5:8-9a) This is why the "for you" in the Holy Supper is so dear to us. Christ's atoning work that He delivers in His Supper is "for you!"

St. Paul addresses the danger of false worldviews well in Colossians, "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition,

according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.” (2:8) How many times have we seen our young people taken captive by the empty deceit found at most universities? This is why the preaching and liturgy are so dear to us. The Word of God renews our mind in the manner Paul talks about in Romans 12:2.

The heart of your old man that you struggle with daily is truly evil. Jesus says, “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.” (Matthew 15:19) God said through His prophet Moses, “The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5) This is why we value our Baptism so much. We daily drown the old Adam in the waters of our Baptism to arise as new creatures before God!

The purpose of Scriptures and preaching is to remind you who you are and whose you are. You are a sinner redeemed by grace alone through faith alone for the sake of Christ alone. This seems too good to be true, but we know it is true because Christ is raised from the dead. You belong to Christ. Let me leave you with this wonderful promise from the mouth of Jesus Himself:

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will *never* cast out.”

Amen!

In Christ,
Pastor Maggard