

Walking In Truth

2 John 1:1-13

Having finished 1 John last Wednesday night, we now move on to the letter of 2 John. There are a couple of things I want to draw to your attention even before we actually get into the letter.

First of all, some scholars say that 2 John is perhaps the “cover letter” for 1 John. Some of the reasons are

1. 2 John starts out in the way most ancient letters began.
 - a. Stating first of all who it is who was writing the letter (even though here we see the title, “the Elder” instead of a name, but we will speak of that in a moment)
 - b. Then stating to whom it is addressed. Once again there is not a name but the titles of “*The Elect Lady and Her Children*” (again, we will look at that in a moment).
 - c. Then by way of the opening remarks there is a blessing given to the intended recipient, “³ *Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.*”
 - d. 1 John has none of that.
2. With 2 John starting out like a customary letter of the time, we also look at 1 John, which has no introduction, addressee, or initial blessing. In first John the author gets right down to business. Much as if it was a continuation of something already written. Therefore some feel that even if 2 John is not the actual beginning or cover letter for 1 John, there is probably one that should be there... possibly lost somewhere along the way.

Well, having said all of that about all of that, there is actually a clue within 2 John that leads us to believe that **maybe it wasn't the cover letter for 1 John**, but is a letter unto itself. Just look quickly at the second to the last verse, verse 12

2 John 1

¹² *Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.*

The writer seems to be saying, “*This is all I’m going to write at this time. I talk to you when I see you.*”

Yet, even with that some scholars feel that perhaps he realized he was not going to be able to make that journey, thus he went ahead and wrote out what he was wanting to share with them, thus we have 1 John.

As far as the letter itself, when we look at the introduction of 2 John we are met with an **unknown identity**, declaring himself to be “the Elder”. The Elder could mean as little as, a **title of endearment**, such as “the old man”. Or it could be seen as a **title of great respect**, as in one of the overseers of the Church. Personally, I agree with the latter.

As far as the ancients, nearly all agreed that this was a letter pinned by John the Apostle (thus the name remains “*The Second Epistle of John*”). John was the youngest of the apostles during the earthly ministry of Jesus and it turns out that of the twelve original apostles, John is the one who lived the longest, and actually died as an old man of natural causes.

Not that they didn’t **try to kill him**, but the Lord God prevailed and John lived to see another day. Tradition holds that John was sentenced to death in a boiling vat of oil. Yet he emerged unharmed from the experience. Again tradition tells us that John lived into old age dying sometime after AD 98. He is thought to have died in Ephesus.

So we have John, the Elder (both in age and in Church position) writing to “*the Elect (or Chosen) Lady and Her Children*”. Most scholars feel he was writing this letter to a particular Church. With his connections to the Church in Ephesus, many believe that He was writing to the Ephesian Believers.

One of the reasons for the anonymity behind both the author and the intended addressee could very possibly be the continual rising of persecution. This would hold true for the writings of 1 John also.

The persecution could have been from the Jews, the Romans, or for some even inside to Church – the **false prophets and false teachers** he alludes to in each book.

Nothing can be certain on those levels, but it would appear that he was familiar enough with the intended addressee and some of their congregation that he **actually knew some of them personally**. Look at verse 4

2 John 1

⁴I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father.

So with the accepted understanding by most scholars and New Testament teachers, we have here John the Apostle (the Elder), writing a very short note to a particular Church (the Elect Lady and her children), very possibly the Church at Ephesus.

One other thing, the shortness of this letter would have allowed it to be completely on just one piece of papyrus.

The content of the letter goes right along with what had been written in 1 John – he **warns against the antichrists and the false teaching** in reference to the **deity of Christ**, there is also the instruction to be obedient to the commands of the Lord and insisting upon following the command to “*love one another*”.

Speaking of “truth” and “love” – these seem to be the reoccurring theme throughout all three of these epistles...

Let's look at the opening verses

2 John 1

¹THE ELDER, to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, ²because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: ³Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. ⁴I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father.

Did you happen to notice all the “**truth**”?

There were so many lies being brought into the Church, John was concerned that the Church continue to –

- Know the **Truth**
- Abide in the **Truth**
- Continually walk in the **Truth**

Okay, here's the test. If it's anything less than the Truth, what is it? A lie!!

What if it's just a half-Truth, partial Truth, do a shading of the Truth, holding back the Truth..., What are they? All of these are forms of a Lie.

Our own lives sometimes have these issues that we deal with – the natural tendency of not wanting to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, leads us to have people swear or affirm in a Court of Law that **they will** tell the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth.

Too often man is prone to shade the Truth to display himself as a better character, when in reality, as Jesus told us,

“It is the truth that will set you free!”

How desperately the world needs to hear the Truth today, but instead they demand that if we are going to show tolerance with each other, then **we are required to withhold, twist, or deny the Truth.**

The world today says that speaking the Truth is actually cruel, uncaring, and intolerant. And they label all who would **speak the Truth as haters, bigots, racists, and at best, uncaring for the feelings of others.**

I don't know about you, but if I was walking around with **my hair on fire**, I would want someone to let me know the truth! And then, if I didn't respond or understand what you were saying, I would hope you would care about me enough to knock me down and pour water on the flames... even if I received a scraped knee and got all wet in the process. Those are **small issues** compared to the fact that you would have saved me from **impending destruction.**

We need to be people who

- Know the **Truth**

- Abide in the **Truth**
- Continually walk in the **Truth**
- **AND** continue to declare the **Truth**

John declares that *grace, mercy, and peace will be with them*, but only as a result of their lives being lived *in truth and love*. That's why he gets excited when he declares that he has actually seen some of the Fellowship, demonstrating through their lives in **both word and action** that they are *walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father*.

They were **following the teachings** they had received from the Apostle and others. Their lives were a **testimony of their obedience to the Truth**. And apparently it wasn't just in word only, during a Sunday meeting of the faithful only... John alludes to the fact that he had seen their lives in reality, living out their profession

*“Oh, would to God that all the Church,
would live out our profession in Truth, by
walking in obedience to the Word we profess!”*

Grace, the unmerited favor of God, given to us though we do not deserve it at all.

Mercy, the kindness of God to not punish us in all that we truly deserve.

Peace, the comfort of God that comes into our lives in the midst of the chaos that surrounds us. The comfort that comes when we **focus on Him and Him alone**.

Grace, mercy, and peace but only as we continue to walk *in truth and love*.

John moves on in verse 5

*⁵ And now I **plead** with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. ⁶ This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.*

Doesn't this sound very familiar to the message of 1 John? As a matter of fact, he says almost the exact same thing in

1 John 2

⁷ Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.

And also in 1 John 3:11

¹¹ For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,

The fullness of that commandment of *love* can only be completed as we *walk according to His commandments*. As John writes in verse 6, "*This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it,*" there is no doubt he is referring to the command to love one another. The way that the sentence is formulated, leads us to believe that perhaps some of the false teachers, bringing their false doctrine, may have tried to twist the Lord's words around in reference to the importance of our love for one another.

⁷ For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. ⁸ Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. ⁹ Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son

John now shifts, but the shift is still tied into the need to live our lives in the Truth and in obedience to the commands of God. There appears to be a direct tie-in between the plea of verse 5 and the warning of verses 7-8. There seems to be a direct correlation between the warning to walk in accordance to the commandments which they had received from the beginning and the fact that deceivers and false doctrine are on the rise and they are twisting the very doctrines that are the foundation of Christianity. This is the same battle we spoke of in 1 John 4

¹ Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has

come in the flesh is of God,³ and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

It is of monumental importance, what you believe about Jesus Christ. Just as in 1 John he warned the Church to be on the lookout for false teachers and antichrists, so now in 2 John the Apostle warns *many deceivers have gone out into the world*. There is no doubt they have a little bit of the Truth, but they are not walking in the fullness of the Truth and they continually expound their half-Truths, partial Truths, shadings of the Truth, holding back the fullness of the Truth..., all of these are a form of a Lie. And because of this, they show themselves to be *a deceiver and an antichrist*.

When John tells the Church in verse 8

⁸ Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward

He is telling them to exam themselves... *look to yourselves*.

Not to get the answers of Truth within yourselves, but to know that you yourselves are to be *found as children, walking in truth*. He even returns to that idea in 3 John as he writes in verse 3 and 4

³ For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. ⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Here in 2 John 8 he writes, *Look to yourselves... examine yourselves*. He wants his joy to remain, the joy of seeing and knowing that his children are walking in the Truth. John had poured out his life and ministry to bring the Truth to these people. Some were walking in Truth and that brought him great joy. But he also wanted to know that the others had caught on to that Truth, that they had truly come to salvation in Christ, that their lives had been changed, and that they were walking in obedience...

⁹ Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son

Once again, just as in 1 John, he's not talking about an occasional stumble. He's speaking of those who have totally walked away from the Truth and are taking hold of these false doctrines and attempting to pull true Believers into their lies and deceit.

It matters what you believe. Simple sincerity of faith can bring you to be sincerely wrong. If you walk away from the truth of God's Word and the fullness of the teachings of Grace bringing back the burden of the Law... if you pervert the purpose of Grace and use it as a license to live outside the will and plan of God... if you do not understand who Jesus is, that He Himself declared that He and the Father were one; the fact that He was crucified by the Jews for that very declaration that they claimed to be blasphemy... *whoever transgresses (in these ways) and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God... Look to yourselves...*

Then, out of concern for these false teachers coming in and presenting themselves as some sort of authority in the Church, John adds –

¹⁰ If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; ¹¹ for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

What exactly is John saying here, and what is he not saying?

Is he saying that you are to totally write off your Mormon uncle, don't even say "Hello! Have a good day" even though he's family?

Is that what he means by, *if you greet him you'll be sharing in his evil deeds?*

Is he telling the Church to totally write snub your Jehovah's Witness or Scientology neighbor or co-worker? Don't invite "THOSE PEOPLE" to the block party at your house?

Otherwise, *you'll be sharing in his evil deeds.*

No, I don't believe for one moment that is what he is speaking of here. He is dealing with you as a Believer receiving their teachings, accepting them as a fellow Believer and entertaining any portion of their false doctrine.

But to befriend and look for open doors to share the hope of Grace and the truth of the Word of God, of course we need to be doing that. It's not unlike what Paul dealt with when writing the Church in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 5

⁹ I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. ¹⁰ Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

*¹¹ But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone **named a brother**, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner--not even to eat with such a person. ¹² For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? ¹³ But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."*

In the same way that lost people are all around us and in the course of our lives we will be interacting with the lost, so the situation is the same in reference to those who proclaim false doctrine, those who are under the lie of the cults. It's not that we have nothing to do with them, it's that we do not recognize them as Brothers and Sisters in Christ... and we do not toy with their teachings, accepting them as Truth.

Look for open doors, but do not receive them as Brothers and Sisters in Christ. If their doctrine is false and you accept them, you are doing a two-fold damage: **1)** you are opening yourself up to the lies, and **2)** you are giving them false assurance of their own salvation.

John ends his short letter with a desire to get with them personally, face to face.

¹² Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full

Facetime will not do, Snap Chat and Instagram leave too much to desire, and your Facebook post is already a week old. I want to see you face to face. Only then will my true joy be complete.

Then he sends greetings from a Sister Church

¹³ *The children of your elect sister greet you.*

Amen? Amen.