

# 2<sup>nd</sup> John: #Truth



We are in 2<sup>nd</sup> John. This is Exit 24 of 27 in the New Testament, and Exit 63 beginning with the Old Testament. When I was younger and my wife and I would go on vacation, we would get to our destination and I would buy a postcard and would write on the back of it and say, "*We made it, weather is just great, having fun!*", and then I would sign it and send back home. I have learned that depending on how far away you went, if you didn't send a postcard early on in your vacation you could actually get home before the postcard did. So I learned that one of my first priorities on vacation was to send the postcard early in the week. Now a postcard is different than writing a letter to someone. A postcard is just a picture of where you are at, something you have seen, or something you have done. You just write a short, to the point, note to whoever you are sending it to on the back of it.

Now, 2<sup>nd</sup> John is a letter, but it is more like a postcard letter than like the letter to the church at Rome or the letter to the church at Ephesus. Some of you may wonder why would you go on vacation and send a postcard home when you can just pull out your iPhone, take a picture, and shoot a text so it gets there immediately, or take a picture and tweet what you are doing on vacation. To some of us, 2<sup>nd</sup> John will not be a postcard; it will be more like a tweet, or a text message. So for our younger audience to understand the depth of this message and not underestimate it because of its length, I would title this book #truth. If you are in the older generation,

ask someone who is younger what #truth actually means; it has nothing to do with a postcard.

Our Scripture will actually be the entire postcard, the entire text, the entire tweet, the entire letter from John. In the Biblical world, they wrote on papyrus. Scholars say the letter of 2<sup>nd</sup> John could actually have been written on one piece of papyrus, which would be about 5x9 inches.

## **Scripture**

***"The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father. And now I ask you, dear lady--not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning--that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it. For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works. Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete. The children of your elect sister greet you."***

I only have two points in outlining the body of the letter of 2<sup>nd</sup> John, which are verses 4-11. The greeting is verses 1-3, and a final greeting in verses 12-13. It was customary if you were writing a personal letter or making personal correspondence with someone to greet them, say what you were going to say, and then give a final greeting. But the two main points in John's message in verses 4 -11 are this:

1. Walk in Truth (verses 4-6)
2. Watch for Truth (verses 7-11)

Once you understand how much rejoicing it brought to John that some of the children of the elect lady were walking in truth, he goes on to talk about how they should then watch for the truth. This is important; John tells us in the introduction that before we can walk in the truth and watch for truth, we must know the truth. At the end of this lesson, I want you to answer this question: Do you know the truth? If you know the truth, then are you walking in the truth, and are you watching for the truth? What is evident in the life of a person who knows the truth is that they both walk for the truth and they watch for the truth.

## **The Elect Lady**

John identifies himself as the elder. At this time, he is perhaps the last apostle alive. He is the elder statesman of the church, the last of those who literally walked with Jesus on the earth. He has already written his first letter to the church. It is my belief that the recipients of this letter have already received the first letter and that is why the second letter is so brief. That is why it is more like a postcard. John is writing to the elect lady and her children. Scholars are divided about who this is talking about, and there are some great men of God on both sides of this issue. Some scholars actually believe that John is writing to a literal mother who has many children, and that he has met some of her children. And he knows her sister, so he has a close relationship with these two ladies. Men like John McArthur hold this view. Other scholars believe that this lady is not in reference to a literal lady, but is being used as a metaphor of a church and

its members, because the Bible does use the language of a female to talk about the church as the bride of Christ. So the church is considered the lady, and all of its members are her children. Now it does not change the message whichever of these views you take. But notice the adjective by which John describes this lady, especially if she is the church. He calls her "the elect lady." That word is used by the writers of the New Testament, not to speak about our choice of God, but to speak about God's choice of us. I am amazed at how many people run from what we call the biblical doctrine of election. Yet the Bible does not hide this doctrine in a few isolated passages in the New Testament, but just forth rightly reminds of us from time to time that we chose God because He first chose us. In His God-ness, He made a choice of us before we were ever born. He actually made a choice of us before He ever created the world. The basis of His choice was on what He would do for us in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. Never let your belief in your choice of salvation cause you to minimalize or trivialize God's choice of you. Had He not made a choice of you, you would never have made a choice of Him. We are the chosen ones of God.

- **Loving in Truth**

Now I believe John is writing of the church, and so he speaks about how much he loves the church in truth. He is going to mention truth over and over again in his introduction in his greeting. He is also going to throw in that there is another group of people who love the church, and they are all those who know the truth. Then he gives the reason why he and those who know the truth love this elect lady. He said that it is because the truth abides in us, and it remains with us forever. John believes that if you know the truth and the truth abides in you, then the truth that abides in you causes you to love the church, the elect lady of God. If you don't love the church, you don't know the truth. If you don't love the church, you don't have the truth abiding in you. In the first letter, John reminded us we are not to love in word but in deed. So he is going to describe the deeds that

reveal we love the church and know the truth, which is that we walk in the truth and we watch for the truth.

- **Abiding in Truth**

That word, “abide,” literally means ‘to live or to remain in.’ You can see how important this word, abiding, is to John because he uses it over 23 times in his first letter. So what does to “abide” mean? When you examine this word in the Greek, it literally talks about ‘to live, to make a life.’

I think one of the best thoughts that capture this for us is when you are invited over to someone’s house, and as soon as you walk in the door, they say, “Make yourself at home.” If you came to my house, you would notice that I don’t say that very often because to be honest with you, I don’t want you to make yourself at home in my house. Sorry, I’m not being rude, I just want you to go back home eventually. But being a literalist like I am, if you invite me over to your house and tell me to make myself at home, I am going to make myself at home. I will make myself at home in your house the same as I would make myself at home in my house. When you tell me to make myself at home, you are really wanting to confine me to your living room. But what you are really *telling* me is to take off my shoes and to choose what chair I want to sit in. You are telling me not to be formal, just be informal, and act like I am at home. So you are not going to be offended when I put my socked feet up on your coffee table. You are not going to be agitated at all when I grab a pillow and I lay down on the couch and there is nowhere for anyone else to sit, because you told me to make myself at home. Now I don’t want you to be offended when I get up and go to the pantry; I am looking for chocolate. I am going to hunt until I find some; that is what I do at the house. When I go to the refrigerator, I am going to look for my favorite beverage. It will probably be water, Sprite, or an orange soda. When I am at home, I don’t dress in church clothes, I just get an old tee shirt. So I am probably going to go to your bedroom and look for one of your old tee shirts, one of the ragged ones with holes in it. Sometimes I get concerned how we are doing financially,

so I am probably going to look for your checkbook. I am probably going to get on your personal computer and ask for your password...you are going to say, "Whoa!" This is not what you meant when you told me to make myself at home. You didn't mean that at all!

## **The Truth**

That is what is wrong in the church. Most of us want to confine the truth. There are certain parts of ourselves we want to give to the truth, and we want the truth to take hold of that. But there is a part of us we reserve, and we are still going to do it our way. John would border on saying that if the Word is not abiding in you, if the truth is not abiding in you and you are not abiding in the truth, then you don't really know the truth. John is not using "know" to talk about head knowledge; he is talking about having experienced something.

What is truth for John? If you have read John's gospel and 1<sup>st</sup> John, then you know the truth is personified in a person, and that person is Jesus Christ. John actually beheld Jesus in His fleshly state, God in the flesh! When you read his gospel where he is trying to get people to believe in Jesus so that they may have everlasting life, when you read his letter where he is trying to get those who believe in Jesus to have the assurance of salvation, he goes back to that time when they actually *saw* Him, touched Him, handled Him. Can you imagine what it would have been like to view God in the flesh? John said in John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Then he talked about how the law came through Moses, and grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Then he talked about how no one has ever seen God the Father but Jesus. Jesus came to reveal, to exegete, the Father for us. John is saying that if you and I have a personal relationship with Jesus, we love the elect lady of God and her children. We love, not in word because loving in word doesn't mean anything, but we love in deed and action. You will discover that when John uses the word, truth, he uses it to talk about Jesus, about

His person, His words, His teachings, and His beliefs. If you know the truth, if you know Christ, you love what He loved, and He loved the church. I shouldn't tell this, but I am going to anyway. I played one year of basketball in high school my freshman year and we traveled with the girls' varsity team. This was back when girls' basketball was just really starting in Western Kentucky, and there were times when a girls' basketball game might last for nearly three hours. There was foul after foul, walk after walk. I am not teasing! It was so terrible that I made a vow that when my freshman year ended I would never go to another girls' basketball game in my life! During the rest of my high school game, I tried to show up after the girls' basketball game was over just in time to see the boy's game. I really did! Now don't throw rocks at me yet. Then something happened. My wife and I got married, God blessed us with a child, and our first-born was not a boy; it was a girl. My wife had the ribbons, bows, and the pink dresses, and we put her in the beauty contest. She was actually Miss Hardin. It was not for her. She liked this little round object that you bounced...a basketball. I was in a dilemma. I vowed I would never to go to another girls' basketball game, but my little girl loved basketball. So I began to teach her to play basketball. I began to coach her in basketball. I was actually with her when her little team placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in the state AAU championship. I suddenly realized that I didn't dislike girls' basketball anymore. I had hung around my daughter so much that I began to like and love what she liked and loved. My relationship with her caused me to like what she liked.

You can't hang with Jesus, you can't say you know the truth, and not love what He loves, and that is the church. Let me remind you of how much He loved the church. If you measured your sacrifice to the church against the One who really loved the church, you would come up short because He gave His life to purchase the church with His blood. Why is this little book of 2<sup>nd</sup> John in the Bible? Why is it right before the end? It is not because it is so little; it is because it is so big. God wants us to make sure we know the truth. If you know the truth, you will walk in the truth.

## **Walking in Truth**

Now John meets some of the church members of this church, and he said he rejoiced that some of their children were walking in the truth. Now honestly, my first thought was that is sad, because not all the church is walking in the truth, just part of them are walking in the truth. As I read this over more, I wondered why I was reading that into this passage. This doesn't say that not all of the church was walking in the truth. It says some of the church was walking in truth. I think it means that perhaps John hadn't heard or met every person in this church. But the ones he had met in this church were walking in the truth, and that caused him to rejoice.

From time to time, I have people tell me what a great church member you are. They will describe a situation you were in with them; you didn't even know they weren't paying attention, but they brag on you to me. Now when they brag on you, it doesn't mean you are the only one doing right. It just means you are the only one they know who attends this church. And because of you, this church has a great reputation.

Now John is not saying all are walking in the truth, because we know there are some people who have named the name of Christ that are members of the church, and they do not walk in the truth. One reason they don't walk in the truth is because you can still be disobedient as a Christian even when you know the truth. Christians can still sin. Then we also have to face the fact that there are some people in the church who can't walk the truth, they don't watch for the truth, because they don't know the truth. Please hear me...do you know the truth? If you know the truth, you should be walking in the truth.

- **Keeping God's Commandments**

Then John describes what walking in the truth is; we keep the Father's commandments. Now the commandment He has given us is not a new commandment; it is an old commandment. The old commandment is to "love one another." If my kids tell me they love me, I expect my kids to do



what I tell them to do. Don't say you love daddy, then do something that Daddy don't want you to do. There has always been that argument where a kid who is disobedient tries to tell you how much they love you. Don't fall for that; when they are being disobedient, they are loving themselves. If you love God, you obey Him. Why do you obey Him? It is because you know Him. Who is He? He is the truth. Bring your life in line with Him, and He says to love one another.

- **Love Towards God and Others**

Jesus called this a new commandment, but it was really an old commandment. How can it be a new commandment and old commandment at the same time? In the Old Testament, one of the first things God told His people, Israel, was to "love the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your might," then "love your neighbor as yourself." The New Testament says the whole law hangs on love; love for God and love for your neighbor. Jesus came along and told the Jewish people, who He now constitutes the church, that He is giving a new commandment that is an old commandment, which is to "love one another." But this time, it was made new when He said to "love...as I have loved you." You see, your example now of loving is not to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Your example now is to love the church and people just like Christ did.

How are you doing with that? Isn't that enough on a postcard? If John just sent a postcard to you saying, "love one another," what more does he need to say? In my research, I read where some historians say there was a group of people with John as he was dying, and some of the last words from John's mouth to the people around him were "love one another." History says one of the people with him said, "John, we know that. Is there anything else you want to tell us?" His last words were, "It is enough." What is enough? Love one another as Christ loved you.

I have noticed that because of our flesh, we have tendencies to love those people who love us the way we need to be loved. When they quit loving us

the way we need to be loved, we have this tendency to abandon them or pull away from them. We think the reason we have pulled away from them is because of what they did. How can we do that if we really love them? If someone in the church fails you, it does not give you the right to abandon them. You say, "But they are not loving me." Aren't you supposed to love them? This word that the Bible uses here is the Greek word, ***Agapao***.

It has four characteristics:

### **1. Selects one to love**

This type of love selects an object to love because the need was in the one being loved, not the one doing the loving. There is no self in this love; it is self-less. It is other oriented; it is other motivated. The very reason you chose to love the one you choose to love is because of them, not you. You are not getting into this relationship for what you are going to get out of it; you are in this relationship for what you can give. There are no strings attached.

### **2. Evaluates their need**

Once you make this choice, you then evaluate the need that person has.

### **3. Elevates their need**

Once you have evaluated that need, you elevated that need to a place of priority in your own life.

### **4. Meets their needs from internal resources**

You look within yourself and impart what you have from your own resources to meet that person's needs.

That is what we have been commanded in the church. Jesus Himself said that by this, (this type of love He has for us) as you display it, one toward another, the world will know we are His disciples. Does the world know that we are disciples of Christ? If we know the truth and the world hears us say we know the truth, then the world expects us to walk the truth, just

like God does. This word, walk, literally means 'to walk around.' It refers to your lifestyle. Our lifestyles should reflect love toward others.

## **Watching for Truth**

Right in the middle of this, John stops and says, "Whoa, watch yourself! There is a danger that some of us might lose what we have been working hard for and not win a full reward." I am amazed at the commentaries and the scholars who immediately believe that this teaches you can lose your salvation. Does the Bible anywhere imply or state that you should work for your salvation? No...as a matter of fact, the Bible makes it clear that salvation is not of works. Salvation is a gift. This isn't saying that you are going to lose what has been given to you. This is saying you are in danger of losing what you have been working for, which is a full reward from God.

- **Deceivers and Antichrists**

So we have to watch out for the deceivers and antichrists in the world, not just in the world, also in the church. As the apostolic age came to an end, the church had false teachers creeping in. There was a group of teachers who were teaching that Jesus Christ did not have a body. He was not a real man. He was not like you and I, He just seemed to have a body. Another teaching was that the Spirit of the Messiah just came on Him at His baptism, borrowed a body, and then left Him when He was being crucified. There is actually an ancient gnostic painting of the fleshly body of Jesus hanging on a cross, and over beside is the Spirit of the Christ, laughing, saying, "They think they are crucifying me." Now for us, we accept God in the flesh. But can you imagine what it would have been like when there was a man walking around on the planet saying He was God in the flesh? Remember that in the ancient world, many had this belief that spirit was good and matter was evil. How can a God who is spirit and good have a body that is matter and not be evil? So based on that thought, they did not believe Jesus Christ was God in flesh.

There are still many people of today who are still under the umbrella of Christianity that do not believe Jesus is God in flesh. They are no longer listed as cults as they were several years ago; they are now accepted as Christians. I say no. There is a false belief today that doctrine divides. Doctrine does not divide; doctrine unites. Yes, it divides, but it only divides after it unites. It divides when a person has to take a stand and say publicly, "I do not believe what you believe. I am not one of you. I am not like you." John MacArthur tells an interesting story about two students from Brigham Young University coming to him and inviting him to speak at their university because he was so much like them. Can you imagine anyone from Brigham Young University believing they have anything close in similarity to John McArthur? Though John would not accept that invitation, he sat down with those two people from the university, and when it was over, they understood without a doubt that they were not alike. That scares the church today. We don't want to admit there are people who are not like us and don't believe what we believe. Therefore, they are a danger and not just to the church, they are deceivers and they are antichrists. Not only do they deny who Christ is, many of them deny what He actually did on the cross, which is making a sacrifice on a cross that is sufficient to take care of what was wrong with you, and that is your sin. There is nothing you can add to the finished work of Jesus Christ.

I don't recommend you watch this, I only saw the edited version. But there was a movie out title A Few Good Men. It is a military movie, and some young men are on trial for murder. Tom Cruise plays a lawyer and Jack Nicholson plays a high-ranking official in the Army. Toward the end of the movie, on trial, Tom Cruise gets to interview or interrogate Jack Nicholson. There is a point in the movie where Tom Cruise just keeps yelling in Jack's face, "I want the truth! I want the truth!" Jack finally says, "You can't handle the truth." Whoa!

If you know the truth, are walking in the truth, and watching for the truth, we can handle the truth! Here is the truth...there are people under the umbrella of the church today who are deceivers and they are antichrists.

They are not leading people correctly in the way of Christ or of salvation. John says that you and I had better make we understand that in no way are we to be helping them in any way to fund or enhance their ministry.

In ancient culture, the church, spread out all over the Roman Empire, depended on hospitality. They didn't have a Holiday Inn back in those days and to stay at an inn was bad. A traveling prophet or a traveling evangelists would come through town and said, 'hey I am a preacher.' So someone would invite him into his house, and the next thing you know, he would start teaching and preaching. So the man who invited him in is actually funding his ministry, giving him shelter, and giving him food. The man realizes this guy isn't teaching what John or Paul handed down to them, so what is he supposed to do? John said to kick them out of your house. Now this isn't saying you can't sit down in your house with an unbeliever. It doesn't say you can't enter into a conversation with someone who is teaching a false gospel. That is not what it is saying. It is saying that in no way are we to put our authority, our approval, on people who teach a false teaching about Christ.

- **Absolute Truth**

The church believes in something; it is called absolute truth. If we believe Jesus is God in the flesh, then He is the truth, the way, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but by Him. If He has revealed the Father to us, then He is the perfect revelation of God. So as the truth, His words are true, His teachings are true, and His beliefs are true. All other truths are measured against that truth. Anything that does not measure up to that truth is a lie, a falsehood; it is an error. I feel for us, I hurt for us in some sense because the world will never understand us. They don't understand why we can't sanction abortion, they don't understand why we can't sanction divorce, and they can't understand why we can't sanction a lesbian and gay lifestyle. Yes, a supreme court can overturn a lower court ruling, but we ultimately believe that the highest court of man has to answer to the highest court of Heaven, and that is God. Have we been

wrong in our past on things? As a church, we absolutely have. But those things are clearly taught to us in the Word of God must unite us. And as it unites us, it will cause a divide between us and those who do not know the truth.

- **Abiding in the Teaching of Christ**

Now it sounds good to run ahead, but John says people can run so far ahead that they are outside the perimeter of Christ. When a person gets there, they don't know God. John is just frank; they don't have God. And then, John talks about the person who continues to "abide in the teaching of Christ." This preposition, "of," literally means 'the teaching *about* Christ.' So the people who abide in the teaching about Christ, about who He is, what He came to do, and the sufficiency of Christ in our salvation, have the Father and they have the Son. That is why we love the church.

In the next several years, you will see the world in which we live turn more and more away from the church. But you will begin to see that those who truly know and love God will cling to the church in a way they never have. It is because the Word of God, the teachings of Christ, abide in us, and they are never going to leave us. We will never leave the church. She has been elected by God, each and every one of us. When Jesus asked Peter if he would turn away also, Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Where would we go? Right now doesn't just count right now. Right now counts forever.