

Abiding in the Truth (2 John 1:1-13)

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The Enemy is trying to deceive us to exchange truths for lies. Therefore, we need to know the truth, walk in the truth, and protect the truth.

INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, I was given a gift to spend a few nights in a timeshare. I really enjoyed it. Before I knew it, the salesman talked me into buying a unit. What appeared to look good on the outside was not good at all in the long run. I got deceived. There were long term consequences that I did not want.

Our enemy is trying to trick us and deceive us to trade something precious for something cheap. As we continue our series on Shortest Books in the NT, we will be studying 2 John today. Some false teachers have invaded the church and John warns the believers about them. The enemy is the great disguiser, who masquerades as the truth. Let us turn to 2 John. Before the author deals with the false teachers, he begins with the commendation of knowing the truth. Let us read vv. 1-3, “The elder, to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth- and not I only, but also all who know the truth- because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father’s Son, will be with us in truth and love.”

A. The Commendation of Knowing the Truth (1:1-3)

John, the author, addressed the letter to the chosen lady and her children. There are two views as to who the recipients are. Some believe the chosen lady is a godly mother. Some believe she is referring to a local church and “her children” are the believers in the church. While it is true that John is addressing a group of people as we see in verses 6,8,10, he is also addressing an individual in verses 1,4,5,13. One way of interpreting this is that a group of believers that assemble together as a church is meeting in a home of this chosen lady so that John has both the family and the congregation in mind.

There are a couple of key themes in this first section. We note that the words love and truth are repeated a number of times. Actually love and truth go hand in hand. The word, “truth,” occurs four times in the first three verses. Whenever one sees a word that is repeated a number of times, the author is trying to make a point. The Apostle John expressed his love for the chosen lady and her children. He is not the only one that had this special relationship. But this is also true for all who know the truth. There is a special community among believers. John is giving commendation for those who know the truth.

1. Know the truth

Truth is the basis for their love for one another. What is this truth that John is referring to? Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father, but by me.” (Jn. 14:6). Jesus is the truth. Jesus also said that the Word of God is truth as recorded in John 17:17. We are to love one another as Jesus Christ loved and as the Word of God instructed us. Just as Jesus loved us, we are also to love others in the same way. The Bible says in 1 John 4:11, “Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

The truth here is ultimately the truth of the gospel. Because of the gospel, we have been set free from our selfish desires. We can demonstrate agape love toward others. This is a sacrificial love. For those that know this truth, we have a special relationship

with one another because we are children of God. We know and accept the truth. As we experience a relationship with God, we can demonstrate love to others, particularly those that are in the family of God.

Knowing the truth is a key to combatting false teachers. We need to know the gospel so well that we will not be deceived by false teachings.

ILLUSTRATION: When I was in college, I was working in a fast food restaurant for four years. In my final two years, I became one of the managers in the store. One of my responsibilities is to check bills to make sure we were not taking any counterfeit bills. We were trained to examine genuine bills. There are certain elements in a real bill. We had to be so familiar with the real thing that when a false bill came along, we could detect it right away because we know the authentic bill. In the same way, it is critical that we know the truth so that when false teaching comes along, we will recognize it.

2. Love motivated by the truth

Love and truth go hand in hand. Based on God's truth, John came to love the church. Christian love is motivated by a knowledge of the truth, which has been revealed in Christ. Truth is the basis of love. When we understand the truth that God loves us, then we are motivated to love others. The more we understand God's truth, the more we are motivated to demonstrate love.

How did the church come to know the truth and become children of God? It is answered in v.3. It is through the grace and mercy of God, who is the source of grace and mercy. We are not saved by God's love, but by God's grace. John starts off in the epistle by commending them of knowing the truth. John does not stop there, but goes on to challenge them to walk in the truth in vv.4-6, "It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. And this love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love."

B. The Challenge to Walk in the Truth (1:4-6)

1. Walk in love

John was filled with joy knowing that some of the believers were walking in the truth as God had commanded them to. What does it mean to walk in the truth? Walking gives the connotation of living out the truth. It is more than knowing the truth, but going another level of abiding in the truth, which requires volition. The issue with many people is that we know a lot of things, but we might not have put them into practice. When we walk in the truth, we have transferred knowledge to application. It is not until we live out the truth that we experience abundant life.

ILLUSTRATION: I had someone ask me this week. Why are so many bad things happening to me? I come to church and I even go to Sunday school and small group. Well, I told that person that he might know the truth, but was not walking in the truth.

One of the truths that OT as well as Christ has taught us is to love one another. Truth and love go hand in hand. It is not a new commandment, but an old one. However, few are practicing it because we are selfish people that always put ourselves above others.

God teaches us to put others above ourselves as we walk in love. It is the love that reaches out to people even when they do not deserve it. Jesus loves everyone no matter who they are. As this supernatural love is being demonstrated, others will recognize that it comes from God. In the last sentence of v.5, John asks them to love one another. The original word has a stronger understanding than ask. John is urging, begging and entreating them to love one another. It has the idea of urgency. Love is not an option for believers. The Bible says, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciple if you have love for one another." It is when we are able to love those that mistreat us that it becomes an evidence of God living in us.

ILLUSTRATION: Several months ago, I received some harsh criticism. My natural reaction was to lash back. But God reminded me that He loved me even when I was rebellious to Him. Just as Jesus has loved me, I need to demonstrate the same agape love to others. Are there people that have mistreated you? Instead of seeking revenge, may we demonstrate love. Others will realize that it is an act of God. Surely, we cannot do it by ourselves. It will give glory to God.

[What does it mean to walk in love? In verse 6, John explains that walk in love is the same as walk in obedience. Walk refers to a way of life.]

2. Walk in obedience

The only way we show that we love God is by doing what pleases Him. Christ has made it clear in (1 Jn. 2:3-5), "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him." (John 14:15) "If you love me, you will obey what I command." If we love someone, it is natural to see obedience that follows.

ILLUSTRATION: If your significant other says that she loves seafood, if you love her, you would take her to a seafood restaurant. Your obedience is a demonstration of your love for her. This is also true with our relationship with God. The bottom line to love is demonstrated by obedience. Someone said, "Words are cheap. You need to show your love by action." Do we really love God? There is one clear way of showing our love for God by obedience.

APPLICATION: Since this is a new year, what are two things that you know are God's will but are not doing? That is what I call knowing the truth, but not living out the truth. The only way to experience abundant life is to walk in the truth by walking in obedience. I challenge you to show your love for Christ by obeying God. Two things that I been wrestling with are two things that all Christians know they should do, but do not do it. I have come a long way during the past couple of years, but I need to continue to make progress. Those two things are prayer and witnessing. If I love God, I would consult with him more in prayer and to build relationship with the lost and look for opportunity to share spiritual truth with them. What are two things that you want to do better this year in 2019? May we walk in love by walking in obedience.

[We have covered the commendation of knowing the truth and the challenge of walking in the truth. Now, John is setting up the scene for the real issue at hand. There were false teachers coming into the church. John in the last section cautions them not to aid false teachers, but to protect the truth. Let us read vv.7 to see who are our enemies?

“Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.”]

C. The Caution Not to Aid False Teachers, but to Protect the Truth (1:7-11)

1. Look out for Satan, the deceiver

a. The deceivers deny the incarnation of Christ (v.7)

Up to this point, there are a lot of positive things written. It is when things are going well that we are vulnerable. John warns the believers about these deceivers. These are the ones that say one thing, but mean another. It is their desire to trick us to put aside our belief and come into their camp. What do we know about these deceivers? They do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. They were called antichrist. They are against Christ.

The incarnation of Christ is such a vital truth. You might ask why is it so important for Christ to come as a man? In the O.T. when someone has lost their land and has become broke, he needs a kinsman redeemer to save him from this difficult situation. In order to qualify as a kinsman redeemer, 1) one needs to be a kinsman, 2) one needs to be able to redeem the relative, and 3) one needs to be willing to redeem. Christ fulfilled all three requirements. Jesus identified himself to be one of us as an incarnate man. He took on flesh to be a kinsman. He is able to save us because he is God. Most importantly, he is willing. He is willing to die the most painful death on our behalf so that we can be set free from the bondage of death. He died so that we do not need to die. All that we need to do is to place our faith in Jesus and we will be saved. Jesus made the payment and offer eternal life to us as a gift.

b. The believers are not to aid the false teachers (vv.10-11)

If we know someone that denies the incarnation of Christ, we need to not aid these false teachers. Back in those days, traveling preachers relied on local believers for support and hospitality. It was common to welcome guests into one's home, However, if we find out that these preachers deny Christ coming in the flesh, we are commanded not to help them. Let's read vv.10-11, “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.” If we help them, then we are sharing in their wicked work. Do not let the Jehovah Witnesses or Mormons into your home to propagate their false teachings. We must protect the truth. Hold on to it and not be deceived by false teachings.

[We see the warnings include looking out for Satan, the deceiver. In this section, we are also warned to look out for self so that we don't forfeit our rewards. Let's read v.8, “Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.”]

2. Look out for self

a. Don't forfeit your rewards (v.8)

John has started in the beginning of this epistle by commending the believers of knowing the truth and challenging them to walk in the truth. The faithfulness in the truth has gained them rewards. It can all go down the drain if we yield to these false teachers. Don't be deceived. The false teachers offer you something you do not have, when in reality they will take away what you already have. What they teach is not what they promise. They over promise and under deliver.

Therefore, it is critical that you know and walk the truth. The more we embrace God's truth, the more we can recognize the false teaching. It takes time to gain reward and we can lose it quickly. What a tragedy it is when God's servants labor faithfully to build up a church, and then the work is destroyed by false teaching. John warns us not to forfeit our reward. In addition, we are also warned not to forsake our redeemer as recorded in v.9, "Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son."

b. Don't forsake your Redeemer (v.9)

The false teachers make us believe that they are progressive and have something new and exciting to share. Unfortunately, they abandon the doctrine that Jesus came in the flesh. If a person does not abide in true doctrine, then he does not have either the Father or the Son. We are told not to forsake our redeemer. We are warned about a deceiver out there that wants to trick us. As we are forewarned, we will be more aware of our enemy. Therefore, we will not be surprised in falling for a scam. May we hold onto the truth and not forsake our redeemer.

D. Final Farewell (1:12-13)

In the final two verses in this epistle, John is looking forward to visiting the believers and personally spending one-on-one time with them.

The Enemy is trying to deceive us to exchange truths for lies. Do not be tricked. But instead, we need to know the truth, walk in the truth, and protect the truth. Hold on to the gospel and abide in the truth.