

Lesson 1- Love in Truth

Today we find ourselves now in the 2nd epistle of John. Last week we wrapped up our study of 1 John and all its wonderful Truths, and today we have the privilege of studying his second epistle. One thing we saw in John's first epistle was John's love for the Truth. And this becomes evident in his 2nd epistle as well. In this letter John tells us the importance to stand in Truth and beware of false doctrine, **2 John 1-13**.

This epistle is only one chapter, consisting of 13 verses and 249 Greek words. This is the second shortest book in the NT. The first shortest is 3rd John, that we will be looking at next week. These two epistles of John are personal letters written to individuals or groups of Christians within the churches of Asia. And they were probably written shortly after his release from the isle of Patmos in 96AD because as we read in both letters, he had an expectancy to come talk face to face to those whom he was writing to, 2 John 12; 3 John 14.

In the opening of this letter, John refers to himself as The Presbyter or the Elder, *ha presbuteros*, Ὁ πρεσβύτερος...

¹ The Elder, to the elect lady and her children... | ¹ Ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ...

In John's gospel and these three epistles, he never refers to himself by name. In his gospel he commonly refers to himself as "the one whom Jesus loved," Jn 13:23; 21:7, 20. And in these two letters of 2nd and 3rd John, he refers to himself as *ha presbuteros*, Ὁ πρεσβύτερος. Not just "an elder", but "The Elder" with the article in front. Denoting one of a kind. John is the only remaining Apostle still alive at this time. The other 11 and Paul had all been martyred before him. He is writing this letter at a very old age, probably around 86 years old at this point and according to Eusebius, the Apostles were scattered throughout the world and John was given the churches of Asia and lived and died in Ephesus, *Eusebius Ecclesiastical History* 3.1. The people of Asia would have known him by Ὁ πρεσβύτερος.

To whom John is writing to is in debate among scholars because he doesn't specifically address the recipient by name as he does in his 3rd epistle. We know it's a woman because he says, "to the elect lady," ἐκλεκτῇ κυρίᾳ. This word, ἐκλεκτός, is used in reference to the elect or chosen of God. This is the title of a Christian, 1 Peter 2:9; Col 3:12; 2 Tim 2:10; Titus 1:1; Rev 17:14. The word, κυρία, is only found here in John's epistle in the NT. It is the feminine form of the word Lord, κύριος. So it literally means a woman in high authority.

Many commentators say because this word means an elect woman in high authority, John could be referring to the Church, as in, the Bride of Christ. Because the Bride is the elect lady chosen by God. But I don't see it that way for a few reasons. 1) If John was referring to the Church, he would have just said, church, ἐκκλησία. There is no reason in this simple letter why John would choose to use an allegory like this. 2) If this were the Bride, then who is the sister in verse 13? "*The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.*" How can "The Church" have a sister? And 3) we, as the Bride, are supposed to be virgins, so if we have children, that's a problem.

Therefore, when John says "elect lady", he is probably referring to a specific Christian woman whose common practice was to welcome traveling missionaries (hospitality), and she probably had a house church in Asia. Her children that are mentioned could be her own biological children, but could also be those who make up the congregation of the house church. She wouldn't be the pastor or an elder, but she probably played a big part in organizing and keeping the church together. Paul gives us a few examples of faithful woman being involved with house churches: Phoebe and Priscilla mentioned in Romans 16:1-4 and Chloe's household in 1 Cor 1:11.

This "elect lady" is just one example of the many faithful Christians who in walk in Truth and are not known by anyone except God. I believe heaven will be filled with these types of spiritual giants who were faithful to God, but yet the world knew nothing about them.

The things we do know about the elect lady and her children is that these are believers who know the Truth. And this is the main topic of the letter: to love in Truth and to guard ourselves from error. When John refers to the Truth, you have to remember in his mind, Truth is a person. Truth is our Savior Jesus Christ. All through John's writings he continually reminds us of this, John is motivated by the Truth. It is what drives him. He lives in the truth and abides in Truth. Truth is what gives Eternal Life. It is the Truth that sets us free, John 14:6; 8:31-32; 17:17; 14:16-17; 15:26-

27; 16:12-14; 1 John 2:20-21, 27; 4:4-6; 5:6-8. This is how John ended his first epistle, 1 John 5:20- “*And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is True; and we are in Him who is True, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the True God and eternal life.*”

Now contrast this with the enemy, those who are antichrist, those who want to destroy the Truth and blaspheme the name of Truth, **2 Peter 2:1-2**. These are the deceivers that John is warning us of. Paul describes these deceivers as people who are destitute of the Truth, 1 Tim 6:5; they have strayed concerning the Truth, 2 Tim 2:18; never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth, 2 Tim 3:7; they resist the Truth, 2 Tim 3:8; they turn their ears away from the Truth, 2 Tim 4:4; they suppress the Truth, Rom 1:18; they exchange the Truth of God for the lie, Rom 1:25; they do not receive the love of the Truth, 2 Thess 2:10; and they do not believe the Truth, 2 Thess 2:12. The world rejects Truth because they reject the One who is Truth, Jesus Christ.

We who are “of the Truth,” 1 John 3:19, we obey the Truth, 1 Pet 1:22; we love in Truth, 2 Jn 1; we walk in Truth, 2 Jn 4; we rejoice in the Truth, 1 Cor 13:6; we speak the Truth, 2 Cor 12:6; Eph 4:25; we know Him who is the Truth, 1 Jn 5:20.

With that in mind, lets look at the first 4 verses...

1 The 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**,

2 because of the **Truth** which abides in us and will be with us forever:

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.

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

¹ Ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἐκλεκτῆ κυρία, καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῆς, οὓς ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καὶ οὐκ ἐγὼ μόνος ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντες οἱ ἐγνωκότες τὴν ἀλήθειαν,

² διὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν μένουσαν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ μεθ’ ἡμῶν ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

³ ἔσται μεθ’ ὑμῶν χάρις, ἔλεος, εἰρήνη παρὰ Θεοῦ πατρὸς, καὶ παρὰ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ.

⁴ Ἐχάρην λίαν ὅτι εὔρηκα ἐκ τῶν τέκνων σου περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς ἐντολὴν ἐλάβομεν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς.

John begins his letter with the foundation of Truth rooted in Love. 5 times in 4 verses he repeats the Truth and that thought carries through the rest of the letter. So, this is a letter of Truth rooted in Love.

John says in verse 1, **To the elect lady and her children...** As we said earlier, John is speaking to a woman in high authority who is taking care of a congregation of her house church in Asia. And John says, **whom I love in Truth...** you can’t separate the love of the Brethren from Truth. We love each other, because we love God, and we see God in each other. As Christians, **we have known the Truth**, we ginoko, γινώσκω, the Truth intimately through experience...

Verse 2... **because of the Truth which abides in us and will be with us forever.** We know the Truth because the Spirit of Truth abides in us now, and the Truth will be with us forever in eternity future because we will be abiding in the Son and in the Father, **1 John 2:24-25**. And this is Eternal Life abiding WITH US, μεθ’ ἡμῶν. This is perfected love WITH US, **1 John 4:17**.

Verse 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.**

Grace, mercy, and peace is reconciliation with the Father through the Son. Grace is the gift of His Son; Mercy is the Propitiating sacrifice that grants us mercy because of His vicarious sacrifice. Remember Jesus is our ἰλαστήριον, our place of mercy; and Peace is our reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. That we have peace with God forever because of the blood of Jesus. Again, notice the future tense. Grace, Mercy and Peace will be with us. This is eternal life in the Son and it is established in Truth and Love. John ends this statement of assurance telling us where this is coming from. **...from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in Truth and love.** This is specifically refuting the Gnostics again by stating who Jesus is. John says, Jesus is the Lord and the Christ and

the Son of the Father, and we have eternal assurance **in Truth and Love**. Eternal Life was manifested to us in Truth and Love and we live Christian life in Truth and Love.

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

John equates walking in Truth as fulfilling the commandment of God. Remember what John says the commandment is in 1 John 3:23- *And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.* Therefore, John says that walking in Truth, receiving the commandment of Everlasting Life, believing in Jesus Christ, and loving one another all are one in fulfilling the commandment. This is the result of our Fellowship with God.

John confirms this in verses 5 and 6...

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.

⁵ καὶ νῦν ἐρωτῶ σε, κυρία, οὐχ ὡς ἐντολὴν γράφω σοι καινὴν, ἀλλὰ ἣν εἶχομεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους.

⁶ καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, ἵνα περιπατῶμεν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ. αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολή, καθὼς ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατῆτε.

Notice how John ties all this together with verse 4... that which we have heard from the beginning is walking in Truth, walking in Love, loving one another and believing in Jesus Christ. This is nothing new or progressive. This is what we have heard from the beginning. This is our manner of life. It is how we behave and go about life... We live by Truth, Love, and Faith in Jesus Christ.

John transitions into verse 7 with a contrast to those who oppose the Truth. John goes from verses 1-6, telling us to love the Brethren and walk in Truth. And now into verses 7-11, to rejecting false teachers and not letting these people in your house. And the world looks at this and says this isn't walking in Love. Because they think that Love is tolerance. They have a false idea of love and they think we should be accepting of everybody's beliefs and lifestyles, but John is clearly rejecting that because the most loving thing we can do toward the Brethren is keep them from deception. True love is walking in Truth and rejecting the lies of the enemy and protecting our Brethren from those who are trying to deceive us. And the most loving thing we can do is reject false teachers from infiltrating into the body of Christ. If you love the Brethren, you're going to protect them from deception.

This is what John is warning starting in verse 7. He warns the elect lady of false teachers infiltrating into her home. Let's read verse 7...

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 ὅτι πολλοὶ πλάνοι εἰσῆλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, οἱ μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος.

If someone is not confessing Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, then they are not walking in the Truth. This is antichrist because they are anti-truth, **1 John 2:18-22**. John is still focused on the Truth, and he is making sure the children of God are not deceived and devoured by the heretical teachings of the Gnostics. John says these deceivers **“do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh”**. This is very similar to **1 John 4:3**, and it is worth noting that the word **“has come”** in 4:3, is *eleluthota*, *ἐληλυθότα*, perfect tense, meaning Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, in the past, with lasting results. But here in 2 John this same word is written in the present tense, *erchomenon*, *ἐρχόμενον*. Which tells us that not only did Jesus come in the flesh, but He continues to be flesh presently, fully God and fully Man even today in heaven. This is a direct refutation to the Gnostic heresies as we have discussed in depth in other lessons.

In verse 8, John gives us an imperative warning not to be deceived by these who deny Jesus Christ...

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

⁸ βλέπετε ἑαυτοὺς, ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέσωμεν ἃ εἰργασάμεθα, ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πλήρη ἀπολάβωμεν.

John says emphatically, “watch yourselves!” The NKJV translation... “Look to yourselves” doesn’t really have the thrust of what John is warning of. This is an intense warning to watch yourselves, so that we do not utterly destroy that which we have worked for. “Lose” is a bad translation. This gives the impression we can accidentally lose our rewards and even our salvation, but the word is *apollumi*, ἀπόλλυμι, means “to utterly destroy.” We can’t lose our rewards, and we can’t lose our salvation, but we can utterly destroy these things by choosing to deny the Truth. This is the sin leading to death that we spoke of last week in 1 John 5:16. This can happen when someone denies Jesus as the Christ and tramples the blood of Jesus underfoot, Heb 10:29; 6:4-6.

Someone might say that John is not speaking of salvation because we don’t earn or work for our salvation, Eph 2:8-9. And that is true, and in the same way, we don’t even earn our rewards. It’s not by selfish works that we earn anything. It’s not by Legalism or the works of the flesh. This is the work of the heart rooted in Christ. It is faith in Jesus and our faithfulness to Him. It is according to our faithfulness that we are rewarded.

So John says, “**watch yourselves so that you do not utterly destroy that which you have worked for.**” This word “**worked for**” is *ergazomai*, ἐργάζομαι, and Jesus uses this same word in John 6. Because there is an element of working in the sense of laboring after Him and always seeking Him, **John 6:27-29**. We are not working to earn our salvation, but rather laboring to enter into His rest and striving against sin, **Heb 12:1-4**; 4:11; this is being diligent to make our election sure, **2 Pet 1:10**; being steadfast to not be led away with error, 2 Pet 3:17. And God promises we will be rewarded for our faithfulness; **1 Cor 9:24-27**; **3:12-15**. But someone can utterly destroy their rewards by making wrong choices in this life, even leading to apostasy.

In verse 9, John tells us how a person can utterly destroy themselves and their rewards...

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.

⁹ πᾶς ὁ παραβαίνω καὶ μὴ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, Θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει· ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ, οὗτος καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει.

He says, “**Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ...**” this is the one who has utterly destroyed themselves.

“**transgress**” is the word, *parabaino*, παραβαίνω- meaning to step aside or deviate. The translation “transgress” gives the idea of sin in general, “transgressions,” but this is much worse than this because if not taken care of, this is the sin leading to death. This is the one destroying himself because he is deviating from and is not abiding in the doctrine of Christ. This one “**does not have God.**” If you don’t have God, you don’t have Life, **1 John 5:12**. But then notice the contrast... the one who abides in the doctrine of Christ, we have **both the Father and the Son**. The True doctrine of Christ is that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who has come in the flesh as God incarnate to die for our sins. If you confess this, you have **both the Father and the Son**, **1 John 2:23**.

We just saw the severity of not abiding in the doctrine of Christ, and now in verse 10, John gives us a warning to not entertaining these false teachers...

10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him.

¹⁰ εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ ταύτην τὴν διδαχὴν οὐ φέρει, μὴ λαμβάνετε αὐτὸν εἰς οἰκίαν, καὶ χαίρειν αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε.

This is how we watch and guard ourselves from error. Notice how Paul tells us we should be watching ourselves and handling these deceivers, **1 Timothy 6:3–5**. We are to be hospitable to the brethren, but only the Brethren. If someone rejects the Truth, they are not of God and John says, do not let them in your house or even greet them.

Verse 11 explains why we refuse them...

11 for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. | ¹¹ ὁ γὰρ λέγων αὐτῷ χαίρειν, κοινωνεῖ τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ τοῖς πονηροῖς.

The one who greets this rejector of Truth joins himself, *koinoneo*, *κοινωνέω*, makes fellowship with this deceiver and this person is at risk of utterly destroying their soul, **2 Tim 2:14-17**.

John ends his letter with a farewell greeting...

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. | ¹² Πολλὰ ἔχων ὑμῖν γράφειν, οὐκ ἠβουλήθην διὰ χάρτου καὶ μέλανος· ἀλλὰ ἐλπίζω εἰσεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλῆσαι, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη.

Face to face fellowship brings the fullness of joy. We as the body of Christ are meant to have Fellowship with one another. This is when we are the strongest, when we have the brethren with us, edifying us and strengthening us in Truth.

13 The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen. | ¹³ ἀσπάζεται σε τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἀδελφῆς σου τῆς ἐκλεκτῆς. ἀμήν.

John is sending a greeting, not only from himself, but also from “**the children of your elect sister**”. The elect lady, whom he is writing to, seems to have had a Christian sister. It’s possible that this elect sister has died, because the greeting isn’t from the sister, but from the children. And the children don’t necessarily need to be biological children, but they are probably Brethren from a house church in Ephesus that are with John.

These small letters of John are so great because they show the closeness and the Fellowship, the family that we as Christians have with each other. This is True Christian Fellowship. Its family in Christ. And in all three of John’s epistles, you can see the deep admonition John has for his whole flock, his little children as he calls them. And he wants them, and us 2,000 years later, to know and be assured in the Truth and to guard ourselves from error.