

2 John – Walking in the Truth

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Open your Bibles to 2 John. Let's just pray and ask the Lord to open our hearts.

Father, as we dig into the scripture tonight, we believe that your word is true. In fact, it is full of truth that we need. Our hearts long for truth. We live in a world that is full of deception and lies and half-truths. And we long, Father, to bathe our hearts in the ministry of your word. And so, as we go through these letters tonight, Father, we ask you to guide and direct our study, and give us wisdom for the day in which we live. Because, Lord, we live in a very evil day. We live in a very challenging day. It's a challenging time, Lord, to be a follower of Jesus Christ. And yet, Lord, you've called us to this place, and you've called us for this very hour.

And we know, Lord, that where you guide, you also provide. And so we look for that provision to live our lives. Holy for Jesus Christ. So use the word tonight, Lord, to equip us and fill us with wisdom and understanding. We look to you Lord, and to no other in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Amen.

2 John begins like this, as letters did during that time. The person who was writing the letter always began by identifying themselves. And he begins this time by saying, "The elder". You'll notice that John refers to himself very simply as "The elder". You might wonder how we know that it is in fact, the Apostle John since he does not mention himself by name.

Well, the answer to that is that his writing style is absolutely unmistakable. It's actually kind of easy when you get to know the Johannine style. This is just him. You'll notice that he goes on to say, "To the elect (that word means chosen) lady and her children, whom I love in the 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" (2 John 1:1-2 - ESV).

So the recipient of this letter is listed as interestingly enough, just simply the elect lady, the chosen lady and her children. Now you might be wondering, did John write this to a woman?

Is this just a letter that he wrote to a gal somewhere and her kids and so on and so forth? Well, I don't think so. I think that John is writing to an entire

fellowship, and he's referring to that fellowship as the chosen lady. You have to understand that the Greek word that is used here, that is translated lady, which is *kyria*.

And by the way, that can be a proper name. They did actually name women *kyria*. It simply just means lady, but it was common to refer to the church in feminine ways with feminine sorts of titles. Did you know that the word “*Ecclesia*” is actually feminine in gender? And you'll remember perhaps that Peter spoke in a feminine sort of way of the church in the area of Babylon.

Let me show you this on the screen from 1 Peter 5 said:

1 Peter 5:13 (ESV)

“She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son.”

And Peter is referring to the church in Babylon. So this is something that was done. I even refer to churches using a feminine sort of title myself.

I get notes from people from all over the country, in fact all over the world, who want to know if there are any other Calvary Chapels, perhaps near them. And so I'll often look up, we have a database of churches around the world. So I can find out, if I find out where somebody lives, I can put the information in, even in a foreign country, and find out on a map, where the Calvary Church is.

So I'll write to them and I'll say, “Hey, good news, we have a sister church in your community.”

Well, why don't we say, “brother church”? We just used that feminine sort of a gender title and that's what Peter did, that's what John does here. And so we can see that John is writing to an entire fellowship of people.

You'll notice in verses 1 and 2 that John speaks of those, and again, you notice the word true and truth is throughout, even just these first couple of verses. He speaks of those “who know the truth, he speaks of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever”. The word “true” or “truth”, I should say in the Bible, is usually the same word in the Greek, but it can have different applications. We can speak of truth as simply that, which is the opposite of false, but the word truth can also refer descriptively to the gospel.

The Apostle Paul in the book of Ephesians calls the gospel the word of truth. It can even speak of Jesus Himself. Because Jesus said, “I am the truth. I am the

way, and the truth and the life,” (paraphrasing John 14:6) and so forth. Interestingly enough, the Greek word that we do translate “truth” means very simply not hidden.

Isn't that interesting? In other words, revealed, right? So truth is something that is revealed by God, and it always gives us a real picture whether we're talking about a picture of God, whether we're talking about a picture of man, whether we're talking about the way to salvation, when we say that the Bible gives us the truth and is the truth, it's saying that it's nothing hidden.

It's giving us the full picture of what those things are talking about, at least as full as it can be in the word. And it, I find it interesting that the truth means not hidden.

Have you ever noticed that there's this interesting kind of human sort of an idea that seems to gravitate to getting the inside story on things? Have you ever noticed that? If you've ever just looked around on the internet, which isn't always a smart thing to do depending on where you're going, but YouTube videos or whatever. There's a lot of videos, I've noticed that start off by saying, “the real untold story.”

And that, you know, is very attractive to people because there's this propensity that we have to want to know the truth. And we always have this idea like something's being kept from us. Somebody's not giving us the whole story. And so you'll see a thing like a video that says, “what your doctor doesn't want you to know about eating fruit,” or something like that. So we click on it and we're like, I got to know, what are they keeping from me? They're hiding something from me—“the untold story.” We're suckers for that sort of stuff.

Even though we have this crazy tendency to want to uncover and see the truth, the whole truth, and understand things. We also have this incredible existence to be staring the truth right in the face and deny its existence. Isn't that something? Even to the point of covering it up. Do you remember when Jesus was speaking with Pontius Pilate? And they got into a little conversation about His ministry and His purpose.

Let me put this on the screen, this is interesting:

John 18:37-38a (ESV)

“Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that, I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness (look at this to this) to the truth. Everyone who is of the

truth (He says) listens to my voice. (Here's Pilate, right? Looking at Jesus, who is the truth, and what does Pilate ask Him?) What is truth?"

I have always thought this is one of the most fascinating passages in the whole Bible, because Pilate is literally standing in front of this man who is the embodiment of what is true. And not just what is true, He is the truth.

John 14:6 "I am the way of the truth and the life," and he doesn't see it. And he says to Jesus, "What is truth?" I find that fascinating, but that's one of the propensities that we have as humans.

Look what Paul goes on to say about the truth from Romans 1. He says, "The wrath of God is actually being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness (look here) suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain, because God has shown it to them."

In other words, God has taken what can be known about Him and He's uncovered it. He's revealed it. And Paul goes on in Romans 1 to say that he has been revealed, first of all through nature. Nature reveals the glory of God. The heavens declare the glory of God.

God has revealed Himself. And what can be known about God is plain. It's true. Remember what truth means in the Greek, not hidden. So it's not hidden, and yet we either deny it or suppress it. Pilate denied the truth looking straight into the face of He who was the truth and Paul says that the wrath of God is revealed against mankind who suppress the truth.

That means they see it, but they actively cover it up because they don't want others to see it. And this is pretty crazy. But the God who is true and who is the source of all truth is willing to give freely to those who are open to receive the truth. That's what Jesus said to Pilate: "I've come to testify to the truth, to those who are willing to receive it, those that can hear my voice, those who desire." Those who want to reject it or suppress it, they won't be able to hear.

And that's why John writes to these people about whom he says, I love you in the truth. And he speaks of that truth as he says, not only I, but all who know the truth. All who have keyed in on the truth, because he says that truth abides in us, it abides in us, it stays with us.

He writes in verse 3, "Grace, mercy, and peace be with us from God the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, in truth (there it is again) and love."

This was a common greeting after someone would say their name, the name of the individual, what they were writing and so forth. You give a little greeting like this, grace, mercy, and peace.

Verse 4, now he starts to give the reason for this short letter: “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've heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it”. And the commandment is to love one another.

But did you notice the word “walking” in verse 4, and then notice that he uses the word “walk” twice in verse 6? And this is where John speaks of the believers' response to knowing and embracing the truth that we talked about. God has unhidden what is true and made it available to those who want to hear it.

Well, what happens when you hear it? That's great. It's wonderful. But now what are you going to do with it? John writes and says, “I just rejoiced to know that some of your kids are walking out.” What has been revealed to them? God has revealed His truth to them, and they're walking it out. They're living it out, and they're showing it by their love for one another. Right? Which is the command of God. They're walking out the truth.

And that's always a beautiful thing for someone who is sharing the word of God to see. Even for myself as a pastor. If you've led a Bible study, done a Sunday school class, nothing is better if you're speaking the word into people's lives to see them walking that word out. Not just hearing, not just nodding, not even coming up to you afterwards and saying, “Good message, Pastor.” That's not the good part. The good part is seeing people walk it out, living it out every day in their lives. So we go on now into verse 7, and John is going to explain here why it's important to see believers walking out the truth.

Look at verse 7: “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”. With this verse, this brings us to the first doctrinal issue that John is going to address in this very short letter.

And it speaks of something that we talked about last time that was swirling around at the time the various doctrinal errors that John was hearing about. And the big question that was being put to people was, “Did God really become a

man, who was born of a woman in the person of Jesus?” Because even though we know the answer to that is yes, the gnostics, and we talked about how this was in the early stages of Gnosticism. And the gnostics countered the idea that Jesus or God was born as a man, with the idea that Jesus was born as merely a man and He became divine at his water baptism when the Spirit descended on Him like a dove.

We talked about this last time in our study of 1 John that He received at that time, the gnostic said the Christ spirit or the Messiah spirit. And He became divine at that point, He was divine for the period of His earthly ministry. And then the Christ Spirit left Him prior to His death on the cross. Because of course, to the gnostics there's no possible way that God can die.

They couldn't figure that out in their brain, and so they had to come up with an explanation, and so forth. John of course, knew and understood that the gnostics were wrong, that Jesus was the God-man, even from birth, and remains so today. So, He refers to this teaching of the gnostics as coming from deceivers.

You'll notice he even refers to them as the “antichrist.” Now, we talked about this previously in 1 John. He is not saying that these people were “the antichrist” as we have come to understand the antichrist from the Book of Revelation, which isn't referred to in the Revelation as antichrist. He's referred to the beast, or as the beast.

But that's not what John is referring to. He's referring to the spirit of antichrist, which is simply the spirit that is anti-truth speaking. And so we look at the world today, and good grief it's full of antichrist. The spirit of antichrist is everywhere because there's a perpetual stream of untruth that's going forth in the world today.

As you're thinking about the early Gnosticism and they're teaching that Jesus wasn't a man. Or excuse me, wasn't the God-man when he was born. And was only the God-man for His period of His earthly ministry and then was no longer the God-man prior to His death on the cross.

You might be kind of wondering and saying what's the big deal about it? So what. The gnostics believed that. Does it really matter? If somebody came to you today and said, “I think Jesus became divine at His baptism by John, and then that divinity left Him, prior to His death on the cross.”

Why? And they asked you, “Why is that a problem?” With what is otherwise known as Biblical Christianity? In terms of Gnosticism, the reason it was so dangerous is that it was just the tip of the iceberg.

And you know how that, you know how icebergs work. You see this little peak of ice poking up through the water, and it's eh, no big deal. But there's this mountain of ice underneath the water. And that is the way it was with Gnosticism because below the surface of the Gnosticism and below the surface of this simple idea that Jesus took on divinity and then later jettisoned it before His death. Where all these other beliefs that eventually led people to question really everything the apostles taught about who Jesus is, and what he came to do on the cross.

Ultimately, it led to a denial of the resurrection, and you know what the Apostle Paul said about the resurrection of Jesus? He said, “If Jesus has not been raised, we're lost.” We're still in our sin. We are eternally separated from God. We are pitiable in our condition and so forth. So yeah, Gnosticism was dangerous and this was something, even though John is addressing some of these early peaks of Gnosticism, the spirit moving through the Apostle John at the time of this writing, knew and understood where these teachings were going to ultimately take people. And that was away from the truth as it had been given by the apostles and prophets.

And that's why John says in verse 8: “Watch yourselves” (that's what he starts verse 8 with) “Watch yourselves so that you may not lose what we have worked for (meaning the apostles) but may win a full reward.” In other words, he's saying, “Hey guys, stand firm in the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, or our labor among you could be in vain.” That's what he's saying. Watch yourselves. Watch yourselves.

And then in verse 9, John goes on to give a general guideline concerning false teachings. And I want you to understand this is a general guideline. He says, “Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God (in other words, God is not by his side. Okay?). Whoever abides in the teaching (and that means keeps to the teaching as it was presented by the apostles) has both the Father and the Son.”

In other words, is working in cooperation with and participation with both the Father and the Son. Now, what does he mean? “Whoever goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching?” He's talking about people who go beyond the word of God as it was taught. In other words, they add to it, they embellish it.

And I see this happening so much today too. Sometimes people will comment on a passage, or a scripture and they'll say things like "I think this means..." And they begin to embellish their own interpretation of the passage in a way that it really has nothing to do with the passage.

I got a note just this morning from a guy who told me a story about a Bible study he was doing. He asked me not to tell the story tonight, and I, okay, I won't, but let me just tell you. I'm not going to tell you the story.

But it was crazy. I read it to Sue, and we howled. And I wrote the guy back and I said, it's a good thing I wasn't doing that Bible study, because after I heard that, I would've said, "That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard in my life." And it really was ridiculous. But it's just people, do these things all the time, I think.

And then they just start rolling on down the line with things and you're like, where in the world did that come from? It's the same thing John's talking about when he says, "everyone who goes on ahead, who moves beyond or embellishes the word of God." He says, God's not with them in that, you need to understand that God is not in that. God wants you and I to stick to the word.

Now, we know that the Bible as a revelatory thing is closed from the standpoint of Revelation. Okay? What that means is, God is no longer adding to the revelation of scripture. Everything that he needs us to know about Him, His nature, about salvation, about mankind, everything He needs us to know, He's given us in the word, that revelation is closed.

God is not adding to that revelation. All right? Now you need to understand something about that when we say the canon of scripture is closed. That doesn't mean God doesn't speak to people anymore.

I had a girl write to me just this week and she asked that question. She said, "Does God still speak to us today? And if so, how is that possible since the canon is closed?" And I said, "Okay, you're asking, these are two different thoughts, because when we say the canon is closed, we're talking about doctrine."

When we talk about God talking to us or speaking to us, whether through the word you're speaking to your spirit through His Holy Spirit, we're not talking about God adding to doctrine. We're talking about just the guiding work of the Holy Spirit to direct the course of your life concerning maybe taking a job or who to marry or how to respond to someone or, you know what I mean? The Lord speaks to me all the time about my role as a husband or as a father. And

that's not adding to doctrine. That is just a personal word or insight that the Lord is sharing with me.

So please understand, I'm getting a little bit off here, but I want you to understand the difference between the closed canon, and that being one thing on the one hand, that doctrine is not ongoing.

So if somebody comes along and says to you, "Hey, guess what? Here's a new teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit that is not in the Bible." You can go back and say, "Uh, no. That's not possible. That part is closed." But if somebody simply comes to you and says, "The Holy Spirit spoke to me and said...", that's very legitimate, if it's a personal word of direction, encouragement, exhortation, that sort of thing. That's the difference.

So John is just giving us a general guideline here. If you run into somebody who is running ahead of what has been written and revealed in the word of God. John is making it very clear that the person is doing it apart from God. Even if they tell you, "God gave me this." No!

Remember what Paul said to the Galatians, "If we or an angel from Heaven. Should give to you a gospel different from the one we gave. Let him be eternally cursed." There's no other word that is being given. So that's an important word right there.

Now, as we finish out this short letter, we find out that apparently some of the believers in this area where John is writing were apparently showing hospitality to some itinerant preachers or teachers as they were coming through the area. But these people were false. These were some of these gnostic teachers who were giving people wrong information. And some of the believers were naive enough to let these people into their homes and support them and help them on their way.

And so John says in verse 10, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching (and he's referring to what they had received by the Apostles through Jesus Christ, he says) do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, even for whoever greets him, takes part in his wicked works."

So John is saying in order, when you show hospitality and give a person rest and provision and send them on their way, you're participating in their work. And I would not have you do that because their work is against the truth. It is part of the spirit of antichrist, and you don't want to be involved in that. And so he says, be careful not to do that.

And then John ends this short letter by saying, “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 (and that is most likely the church in Ephesus, we think where John was at the time, he says) greet you.”

And with that, we come to the end of second John.