

The Second Epistle Of John



Sermon Outlines

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A Letter To A Lady And Her Children

2 John 1-3

INTRODUCTION

1. In the First Century A.D., the early church enjoyed remarkable growth and spread throughout the world at that time - cf. **Ac 8:5; Ro 10:14-18; Co 1:5-6,23**
2. What accounted for this spread of the gospel? There were likely several factors, but one was certainly the “**hospitality**” of the early Christians...
 - a. Paul was able to travel and depend upon Christians opening their homes to him - cf. **Phe 22**
 - b. He encouraged Christians to support those who were teachers of good things - **Ga 6:6**
 - c. John commended and encouraged those who provided lodging and support for traveling missionaries - **3 Jn 5-8**
3. But showing such “hospitality” was not without its potential for supporting the spread of false teachers and their doctrines...
 - a. It would be easy for teachers of error to take advantage of the Christians’ natural propensity to be hospitable to strangers
 - b. Thus it was necessary to counsel Christians to use proper discernment in sending traveling teachers on their way
4. **The Second Epistle of John**, consisting of just one chapter, addresses this very problem...
 - a. Written to “the elect lady and her children” (see comments on recipients below)
 - b. In which warning is given against showing hospitality to certain teachers - cf. **2 Jn 10-11**

[In this study, the first of three lessons on Second John, we shall consider some background information of the epistle and then John’s salutation as found in **verses 1-3...**]

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. THE AUTHOR - “THE ELDER”...

1. Believed by most conservative scholars to be the apostle John
2. The **internal** evidence...
 - a. The three epistles of John utilize much the same language and ideas
 - b. All bear similarity to concepts and language to the Gospel of John
 - c. The term “elder” would be a fitting description of John as the author, writing in his old age
3. The **external** evidence...
 - a. Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp (who in turn was an associate of John), quotes from it and mentions the apostle John by name
 - b. Both Clement of Alexandria and Dionysius, living in the third century A.D., credit John with being the author

B. RECIPIENTS - “THE ELECT LADY AND HER CHILDREN”...

1. Taken literally, the epistle is written to a particular woman and her children
 - a. Many scholars understand this to be the case; e.g., Plummer, Ross, Ryrie
 - b. Some have even supposed the Greek words for “elect lady” may refer to given names:
 - 1) Electa the Lady
 - 2) The chosen Kyria
 - 3) Electa Kyria
2. Taken figuratively, it could refer to a local church
 - a. Scholars who hold to this view include Brooke, Bruce, Marshall, Stott, Westcott
 - b. They understand that “elect lady and her children” (1) and “children of your elect sister” (13) refer to particular congregations
3. Desiring to allow the most obvious meaning of Scripture to be the most correct meaning, I am willing to accept the literal view

C. PLACE AND DATE OF WRITING...

1. **Ephesus** is usually suggested as the location from which John wrote this epistle, as he was known to live there in the later years of his life
2. Estimation of the date of writing varies widely, some placing it before the destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.), most however placing it around **90-95 A.D.**

D. PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE...

1. To encourage brotherly love, and keeping the commandments of God - **2 Jn 5-6**
2. To warn against supporting or encouraging false teachers - **2 Jn 10-11**

E. BRIEF OUTLINE...

1. Greetings (1-3)
2. Exhortation to walk in truth and love (4-6)
3. Warning not to receive false teachers (7-11)
4. Concluding remarks (12-13)

[With this brief background to the epistle, let’s take a closer look at...]

II. THE SALUTATION (1-3)

A. “THE ELDER, TO THE ELECT LADY AND HER CHILDREN...” (1-2)

1. As discussed in the previous section, I understand John to address a particular lady and her children
2. Concerning this lady and her children, John writes of...
 - a. His love for them: “whom I love in truth” (that is, whom he truly loves)
 - b. The love held for them by others who are Christians (“those who have known the truth”)
3. The basis for this love?
 - a. Not for any personal charm or unusual attractiveness
 - b. But because of “the truth which abides in us”
 - 1) This “truth” may summarize all that is contained in Jesus Christ and His gospel
 - 2) Sharing in this “truth” naturally engenders love for one another

- 3) Especially the sort of “true love” or “sincere love” made possible by our obedience to the truth - cf. **1 Pe 1:22-23**

B. “GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU...” (3)

1. Not so much a prayer (as usually found elsewhere), but a prediction
2. These three words refer to wonderful blessings from God
 - a. “grace” - unmerited favor, which God bestows on the undeserving
 - b. “mercy” - compassion, shown toward the guilty and helpless
 - c. “peace” - tranquillity, which is the result of receiving God’s grace and mercy
3. The **source** of these blessings
 - a. “from God the Father”
 - b. “from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father”
 - together with **verse 9**, John makes it clear the Father and the Son are two distinct personalities in the Godhead
4. The **sphere** in which these blessings are to be found: “in truth and love”
 - a. Grace, mercy, and peace are realized only when truth is honored and held
 - b. They are experienced only when the commandment to love is kept (e.g., there is no mercy shown to the unloving and unmerciful)

CONCLUSION

1. With the words “**in truth and love**”, John sets the tone for what is to follow in his letter...
 - a. An exhortation to keep the commandment to love one another
 - b. A warning against supporting those who would deny the truth
2. With this introduction to “**A Letter To A Lady And Her Children**”, I hope that I have set the tone for what should always be true in our relationship as Christians...
 - a. A true love for one another because of the truth that we all share
 - b. A desire to walk in truth and love, for only then can we truly receive grace, mercy, and peace

Have you received the grace, mercy, and peace that comes only from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father?

Walking In Truth And Love

2 John 4-6

INTRODUCTION

1. In his greeting to the “elect lady and her children”, John wrote that the grace, mercy, and love which proceeds from the Father and the Son is in the sphere of “truth and love” - **2 Jn 3**
2. In **verses 4-6**, he expands upon the theme of “truth and love”, doing so in the form of...
 - a. A commendation for walking in truth
 - b. An exhortation to love one another
3. In this study, let’s examine this “commendation” and “exhortation”, seeking to glean whatever principles or lessons that we can from this passage

[Beginning with John’s...]

I. COMMENDATION FOR WALKING IN TRUTH (4)

A. “I REJOICED GREATLY...”

1. Either by visiting or by receiving a report from others, John came to know that some of the “elect lady’s” children were walking in the truth
2. This was a source of great joy to John, just as it was when he heard the same thing about Gaius - cf. **3 Jn 3**
3. As expressed to Gaius, there was no greater joy than hearing about others walking in truth - cf. **3 Jn 4**
4. What about the joy of hearing someone obeying the gospel?
 - a. As great as that might be, there is always the possibility that one will not carry through with their initial obedience to Christ
 - b. That realization can temper one’s joy
 - c. But when time reveals that the person continues to walk in truth, that removes the question of whether one will carry through with their obedience to Christ
5. Thus a great source of joy in the Christian faith can be in the follow up of new converts, as well as in the evangelization of the lost

B. “I HAVE FOUND SOME OF YOUR CHILDREN...”

1. Unfortunately, John could not say “all”, but only “some”
2. This reminds us that even the best of parents may have erring children
 - a. Despite the fact that this mother was so special she was called “the elect lady”
 - b. Like Samuel, the prophet of God, she had some children who were not faithful to the Lord - cf. **1 Sam 8:1-3**
3. Whose fault is this?
 - a. Some might say that in view of **Pro 22:6**, an erring child is always the parent’s fault
 - b. However, such a view of **Pro 22:6** suggests a belief in “environmental predestination”

- 1) I.e., that if the parent provides the proper environment in raising the child, there is no choice for the child but to turn out a certain way
- 2) This would strip the child of any personal responsibility, and lay the blame solely upon the parents
- 3) While the parent will bear some responsibility if no effort is made to restrain the child in his sin, the ultimate responsibility is the child's - cf. **1 Sam 3:11-13; Ezek 18:20**
- c. There is another view of **Pro 22:6...**
 - 1) The literal rendering is "train up a child according to his own way..."
 - 2) I.e., according to his own temperament, aptitude, etc.
 - 3) E.g., if he is mechanically inclined, don't try to make him an office worker
 - 4) This view recognizes that this verse, like much of Proverbs, is giving practical advice on the raising of children, and to realize that children are different and should be raised according to their particular disposition and skills
 - 5) Failure to recognize this results in a child being forced to become something he is not, and he will not likely remain in it
4. The fact remains that despite the best parenting, some children simply choose to rebel against God

C. "WALKING IN TRUTH, AS WE HAVE RECEIVED COMMANDMENT FROM THE FATHER..."

1. This expresses the idea of living in harmony with the truth found in God's Word
2. Everything one does demonstrates a life that is governed by God's commandments
3. Is this "legalism"? No! It is what it means to truly love God - cf. **1 Jn 5:3; Jn 14:15; 15:14**

[So with great joy in his heart, John commends the elect lady and her children for their walking in the truth. But an emphasis on walking in truth without an equal emphasis on loving one another can easily develop a harsh, impatient, and insensitive disposition towards others, just as knowledge without love produces arrogance (cf. **1 Co 8:1**). Therefore it should not surprise us to find John following his commendation for walking in truth with an...]

II. EXHORTATION TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER (5-6)

A. "AND NOW I PLEAD WITH YOU, LADY..."

1. The tone of John's entreaty suggests the seriousness of this exhortation
2. Certainly John stressed in his first epistle the importance of this command to love one another - cf. **1 Jn 2:10; 3:14; 4:20-21**
3. Therefore this is a commandment not to be taken lightly

B. "NOT AS THOUGH I WROTE A NEW COMMANDMENT..."

1. The commandment is not a new one
 - a. It did not originate from John
 - b. It is one which his readers had known since the beginning of their Christian experience - cf. **1 Jn 2:7; 3:11**
2. It is the commandment given by Jesus Himself - **Jn 13:34-35; 15:17**

C. “THAT WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER...”

1. The commandment given by Jesus is to love another
2. Especially according to the standard of love laid down by Jesus: “as I have loved you, that you also love one another” - **Jn 13:34**

D. “THIS IS LOVE, THAT WE WALK ACCORDING TO HIS COMMANDMENTS...”

1. Here we learn what best demonstrates that we truly love one another
2. When I am keeping the commandments of God, I demonstrate true love for my brethren!
- cf. **1 Jn 5:2**
3. I can claim brotherly love all day long, but unless I am walking according to God’s commandments my claim is meaningless

E. “THIS IS THE COMMANDMENT...YOU SHOULD WALK IN IT...”

1. This sentence is simply reinforcing what John has been saying
 - a. The command to love is one we have had from the beginning
 - b. We should therefore keep this commanding by walking in love
2. Such repetition is often necessary...
 - a. For there is always a tendency to hear and not obey
 - b. The three “R’s” of learning is “repetition, repetition, repetition”

CONCLUSION

1. With joy in his heart, John commends; with a pleading voice he exhorts...
 - a. He commends them for walking in truth
 - b. He exhorts them to walk in love
2. There is ever a tendency to do one without the other...
 - a. Some hold to the truth, but do so without love; this breeds harshness
 - b. Others are quick to display love, but neglect the truth; this produces compromise
3. Both are wrong, and there is only one alternative: to walk in the truth, and to walk in love!

May God help us always to do both faithfully!

Warning Against Receiving False Teachers

2 John 7-13

INTRODUCTION

1. In our brief survey of 2nd John, we have seen that John stressed the importance of “truth” and “love”...
 - a. Four times in the first six verses he uses the word “love”
 - b. Five times in these same verses he uses the word “truth”
2. Indeed, our last study observed that in **verses 4-6** we have...
 - a. A commendation for walking in truth - **2 Jn 4**
 - b. An exhortation to walk in love - **2 Jn 5-6**
3. But what if someone comes our way, teaching doctrine contrary to what we have learned from Jesus and His apostles...?
 - a. Should our desire to “walk in love” permit us to receive and support those teaching error?
 - b. Can we do so, and still be “walking in truth”?
4. In the remaining portion of this short epistle, John (the “apostle of love”) is very explicit about such things...
 - a. He tells us to beware of deceivers and antichrists - **2 Jn 7**
 - b. He tells us to look to ourselves lest we lose those things we have worked for - **2 Jn 8**
 - c. He tells us of the danger of not abiding in the doctrine of Christ - **2 Jn 9**
 - d. He tells us we cannot support teachers who fail to teach the doctrine of Christ without sharing in their evil deeds - **2 Jn 10-11**

In this “**Warning Against Receiving False Teachers**”, then, John warn us about several things worthy of our careful consideration. Let’s take a closer look, beginning with a need to...]

I. BEWARE OF DECEIVERS AND ANTICHRISTS! (7)

A. JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES HAVE GIVEN US AMPLE WARNING...

1. In His sermon on the mount - **Mt 7:15**
2. In His discourse on Mt. Olivet - **Mt 24:11, 23-25**
3. Paul, in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders - **Ac 20:29-31**
4. Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy - **1 Ti 4:1-3**
5. Peter, in his second epistle - **2 Pe 2:1-3**

B. EVEN IN JOHN’S DAY, THEY HAD BEGUN TO ARRIVE...

1. Deceivers had gone out, denying that Jesus had come in the flesh - **2 Jn 7**
2. Many false prophets had gone out into the world - **1 Jn 4:1**
3. Denying that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, they were “antichrists” - **1 Jn 4:3; 2 Jn 7**

[With such ample warning, and seeing that they had started to come even in John's day, we should not be surprised to see many such deceivers and antichrists today! To guard against being misled by such deceivers, we do well to consider the next important theme in our text...]

II. LOOK TO YOURSELVES! (8)

A. THIS ADMONITION ALSO STRESSED THROUGHOUT THE SCRIPTURES...

1. Several times on one occasion by Jesus - **Mk 13:5,9,23,33**
2. By Paul in writing to the Corinthians - **2 Co 13:5**

B. THE NEED IS THERE, BECAUSE THE DANGER IS REAL...

1. John was concerned that they not lose the things they worked for - **2 Jn 8**
2. The writer to the Hebrews was concerned that we not fall short of entering our heavenly rest - cf. **He 3:12-4:1**

[With the real danger of falling short of our eternal reward, and with the ever present deceivers who can make it happen, it is imperative that we fully understand the basis upon which our relationship with the Father and Son rests. John is clear about this involves as he stresses the need to...]

III. ABIDE IN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST! (9)

A. THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST: OBJECTIVE OR SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE...?

1. Is it the doctrine about Christ, or the doctrine taught by Christ?
2. As pointed out in the Expositor's Bible Commentary, the question is of little importance for John holds equally to both positions
 - a. It is fundamental to the faith to hold to the proper views about Christ - cf. **2 Jn 7**
 - b. It is fundamental to the faith to obey the commandments of Christ - cf. **1 Jn 3:24**
3. Thus what John says here applies in either case

B. THE NEED TO ABIDE IN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST...

1. Those who do not abide, do not have God - e.g., **1 Jn 1:6; 2:3-5**
 2. Those who do abide, have both the Father and the Son - cf. **Jn 14:21,23**
- **Note:** this verse strongly supports the concept of the Trinity, in which there is only one God, but three distinct personalities in the Godhead (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)

[As long as we abide in the doctrine of Christ, keeping His commandments, we have no reason to fear being misled by deceivers, nor losing our reward. That brings us to the theme which may have prompted the writing of this letter...]

IV. DO NOT RECEIVE FALSE TEACHERS! (10-11)

A. THE CONTEXT IS LIKELY THAT OF SUPPORTING THEM IN THEIR WORK...

1. It was common for first century missionaries to depend upon the hospitality of the early Christians - cf. **Phe 22**
2. In his third epistle, John commends Gaius for this sort of hospitality - **3 Jn 5-7**

B. TO SUPPORT THEM IS TO SHARE IN THEIR EVIL DEEDS...

1. Supporting a teacher made one a fellow worker with him who taught
 - a. That could make one a fellow worker for the truth - cf. **3 Jn 8**
 - b. But if his teaching was contrary to the doctrine of Christ, supporting him would be to share in his evil deeds - cf. **2 Jn 11**
2. Therefore the admonition to the elect lady not to receive or greet such false teachers...
 - a. Not we should never seek to study with those in error who may come our way
 - b. But not to receive those false teachers who seek only our acquiescence to their doctrine and our support in helping them spread it!

CONCLUSION

1. With this “**Warning Against Receiving False Teachers**”, John purpose in writing is fulfilled
2. He then signs off with a brief farewell...
 - a. Having so much more to write, but desiring to speak in person - **2 Jn 12**
 - 1) Why? “*...that our joy may be full*”
 - 2) Despite the convenience of remote communication (e.g., writing letters, talking on the phone, sending email), nothing surpasses the joy of talking face to face
 - b. Sending greetings from “*the children of your elect sister*” - **2 Jn 13**
 - 1) How one interprets “the elect lady and her children” of **verse 1** determines one’s understanding of **verse 13**
 - 2) Either members of another church, or relatives of the “elect lady and her children”
2. As we close our perusal of this epistle, I hope that we are left with a strong sense of need...
 - a. To walk in the truth
 - b. To walk in love
 - c. To be very careful about those teachers to whom we give our support

How is our walk today? Are we walking according to the doctrine of Christ concerning truth and love? Remember the words of John...

“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.”