

RECEIVE, OBEY AND LOVE TRUTH

The Epistle of 2nd John

2nd John 1

TO AN ESTEEMED LADY

This brief note to an esteemed woman in a local assembly is a wakeup call to all believers to be grounded in the truth. We need to be alert to the fact there are those in our day the same as when this letter was written who teach and practice false doctrine. Care needs to be taken as to who we listen to as well as who we will even allow into our homes. Many will come "in God's name" but we don't know them by reputation and they have no introduction from believers in other places as is given in a letter of commendation. To say "I love in truth" is not a casual statement. It indicates our love is based on a mutual love for our Lord Jesus Christ that is not sentimental but real in that it is demonstrated. Loving lost souls and "loving enemies" is a different love than the love in Christ believers share with those who love His name and His word. Many will say today that we can love each other in Christ even if we do not believe the same things about Christ and about the Bible. They indicate that biblical interpretation doesn't matter as long as we agree to differ. We can never surrender the truth of God even though it is important that we love one another. Love is nor really possible without truth. Professions of love in a marriage or family, without honesty, is not really love.

When communicating with a member of the opposite sex there needs to be a conscious commitment to give respect, honor and dignity with genuine interest but no untoward actions. The welfare of a woman and her children is a responsibility of elders in any situation, and for those in an assembly fellowship in particular. John was probably well up in years and was loved and respected by the Lord's people when he addressed this short letter to a woman who was likely a widow with children. The letter was to encourage her and warn her at the same time. The designation of "lady" or "Martha," meant she was well known and likely given to hospitality. The fact of her children being included in this short letter seem to indicate they were influenced in a good way by her. Children are often an obvious reflection of the parents and their attitude toward the word of God and the people of God.

The attitude and actions of an elder in an assembly has great weight so his words and actions must be carefully thought through before he speaks or writes spiritual counsel. In an assembly of believers, the plurality of elders who have a genuine care for the Lord's people makes it possible for one or more to pass on suitable words of counsel. Some saints are more inclined to connect with one brother than another depending on their personality and background. There is a wide variety of need in the flock of God. John was a man of compassion whose genuine love and interest was clear to this lady. When that is true, we are able to encourage, comfort, exhort and correct people and it will be accepted even if it causes some hurt. A gracious man with a Christ-like spirit and attitude, who lives a godly life is one to whom people give heed.

In this short letter, eight of the thirteen verses are found in 1st John in similar expressions or in the sense of its teaching in the text. Truth taught to the Lord's people in general, can be and should be taught to individuals like this elect lady, as one of maturity passes on truth to those new in the faith. Unchangeable truth can be reaffirmed when there is an ear to hear, and those who love the truth will love those who pass it on and vice versa, Love, obedience and truth all go together. To not have each of these is really to have none of them.

"Love in truth" is a title of honor that reflects the divine nature implanted in believers. In this first verse and in verse four the "truth" is referring to the whole of Christian teaching we have received and are expected to practice. in verse two "the truth" is a Person in us and with us. The source of love is truth and so is the nature of love. This "elect lady" who John "loved in the truth," was one who he truly valued in the sincerity of one believer for another. "We know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren." This not just a statement of fact but is that which we experience in our lives together as the people of God.

A spiritual relationship with fellow believers is based on the grace of God which we each have that enables us to appreciate each one who has been designated a child of God by His sovereign electing grace. There are those who take advantage of the graciousness of God's people but have a hidden agenda. Some young people may express love to another person but the motivation may be lascivious or immoral. Others do the same with the objective of gaining a following or avoiding some consequence by getting people to sympathize with them. John's mode of address to this "elect lady" was honorable, honest and open, with the truth as the link and cause of their fellowship. There was no indiscretion in John's "love in the truth." Indiscretion on the part of one believer toward another is to be avoided always and in every situation. "Abstain from all appearance of evil" is a principle that should guide our interaction with other people.

*Love for God and love for God's people
Is normal when the children of God know they are equal.
Each one loves the truth, and in truth they do love
God's grace gave the life that each one does have.
And the nature of truth and love goes together
Both coming to us by the grace of our Savior.
So, it is the best we want to pass on to our sister.
Truth from God is the best gift we can give her.
Reciprocated by one who is spiritually warm-hearted
Is a loving interest which God's grace imparted.
Now we share in common the desire to bless,
And with truth and obedience our love we express.*

"Father of all grace, I thank Thee for those esteemed sisters in Christ who have faithfully serve Thee and Thy people through the years. They are often unnoticed and not given too much recognition for all they have done for the furtherance of the kingdom of God. Give them a sense of contentment and joy in their daily routines of life. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

2nd John 2

FOR THE TRUTH'S SAKE

The truth of God binds people together in love for each other. Love for the Lord and His people, is not a casual emotion nor a fuzzy feeling that comforts us. Christian love is controlled by the teaching of scripture and is demonstrated by our expressions of trust and reality. Fervent love is balanced but it is obvious and open. Commitment to Christ and the faith two people share in Him, brings them together with appropriate expressions of love for Christ. Even though we are different, that common bond of love for our Lord extends to each other. We believe in Him and we believe the truth the word of God says about Him. Physical, cultural or emotional connections are not the bonds that join us to other believers. It is love for Christ and His truth that binds us to Him and each other.

The truth of God within us forms our character, and Christ-like character in believers is what is appealing to other believers. The truth with us is the motivation we have to serve our Lord with enthusiasm and faith. Consistency to the truth has an appeal when love of hospitality, acts of mercy, unsolicited assistance in difficult time is extended to the Lord's people. When the truth is in us, it is the principle in life that guides us and controls our activities.

Our love as believers for each other is for the sake of the One who is "The Truth." There are many who express love in words, but behind those words is the desire to make others feel good about them. Not only does His who is God dwell in us, but He is with us forever. This very distinct from those professions of love and truth that only last as long as something is forthcoming for their benefit. The One who embodies Truth and Love, our Lord Jesus Christ, does not use those traits of His as bargaining tools to get what He wants from us.

In the same way, truth and love in believers are not some fire that flames up in us and then dies. Truth is a life-principle in which we live under its guidance. Love is a life-principle in which we show others what our Lord is like. When some bemoan the place in which they are found, they say, "There is no love here." What they actually are doing is condemning themselves for not showing love to others. Love flourishes where love is shown. Truth practiced, and the faith truth produces is demonstrated when our convictions and actions are used to bless others.

The "elect lady" and her family must have been known by the Lord's people. Truth and love in that home was not just subjects to be discussed. If she was a widow with mature or near mature children who shared her life at home, likely she "entertained strangers" and showed hospitality in the ways that were available to her. She would be one who showed her love to others for His sake.

*Not every thought and action will produce fruit to be seen.
When what we do is for the Lord, it all is done for Him.
Truth taught has a way of showing there is still some right today.
Love in truth that is real, is of more value than what I say.*

*In spite of what society says, "Post-truth is a reality."
Those who love the truth, will not allow men's opinion to sway
Them from their conviction that unchanging truth comes from God.
The Spirit of God within is truth, and the embodiment of truth, our Lord.*

*People may say, "God bless you," and not know what that really means.
Behind words like, "I love you," are plans not easily seen.
When truth and love stay united, obedience to God is not hard.
The results are blessings of grace that with others are easily shared.*

"God of all grace and Father of mercy: I pray that I will not compromise truth for the sake of self-satisfaction or to please others. But at the same time, grant that Thy servant may demonstrate love in ways that are appropriate. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

2nd John 3

GRACE, MERCY, PEACE

A salutation in a letter indicates how one feels toward the person to whom the letter is addressed. John's second letter was a personal letter that opens with words similar to those Paul used when writing personal letters to Timothy and Titus. All God's people need grace, mercy and peace, and appreciate it when they know other believers are praying for those things to be granted to those they love in the truth.

These three things cover all of God's dealings with us. Grace is favor, that God freely gives to those who do not deserve it. It gives delight to those who know they are incapable of meeting their own need and of doing that which is needed for the benefit of others. The natural man does not really like grace because it implies there are things that I cannot do for myself. It undermines my independence and my opinion of myself and my capabilities to meet my every need. It deflates my arrogance when I have to "call upon the name of the Lord" for salvation and for the grace that is needed for effective daily living.

God's mercy is genuine pity towards sinful man in distress, either because of guilt or neglect. Mercy is never in conflict with justice and truth, but is God's way of making it possible for us to be accepted by the holy God. God shows us mercy for Christ's sake by providing what we need through His infinite wisdom and love. We can obtain mercy when we call upon Him at the throne of grace. When we have been shown mercy, it is expected that we show mercy, compassion and forgiveness within the parameters of truth and love.

Peace is a description of our relationship with "God the Father" and "the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father." Peace is the result of all who have been "blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus." Peace is the result of grace and mercy being bestowed upon us. This prayer of John for the elect lady and her family is that grace, mercy and peace will be seen in that family when they promote truth and love. This is the sphere of life and service in which grace, mercy and peace have a place.

The source of all we have is the Father and the Son. This is in contrast to those who seek to find grace, mercy and peace in truth and love, from the ideas and writings of men. Philosophers and religious thinkers seek to find these things from their own meditation on some obscure thought they might have or have heard from someone else. Those whose conversations and opinions are heavily laced with words like, "I think," or "I have always said," or "My opinion is..." or "I have found," or "I have always believed..." are not those who have ever been to the true Source.

The errors of Gnostics in John's day are much like the false teachings in our day. Many professors say that truth is a personal preference. We hear totally foolish comments like, "Your truth is your truth. That is what you choose to believe, and it is that to which you are responsible. My truth is my truth, and may be different from yours, but that is what I choose to live by." These absurd ideas have permeated modern society, and are even taught by some educators. The word Oxford Dictionary chose in 2016 as the word of the year, is "post-truth." It is in this context we live in today. John made a statement that there is the reality of an absolute, unchanging standard of truth. God is the judge who made the standard and His truth will never be changed - nor will He change.

God's ways, standards and words are proven truth. Whatever contradicts, opposes or denies these edicts of His, is false. Deception is a work of Satan that is often embraced as a technique used to manipulate people. This is very dangerous because the outcome is eternal damnation. One person made a statement something like this, "All that is required for Deception to triumph, is for people of Truth to do nothing." Christian parents, teachers and preacher need to remember we are in a battle for the minds, souls and lives

of those around us - especially our children. It is up to us to be able to define truth, defend it and teach it - and to identify that which is false and oppose it.

*Three dignified honorable traits, came recently to visit me.
Each one real and distinct from the other, and none that I could see.
But when these three came in truth and love, I was called to halt and listen.
What I heard them say was so wonderful, my eyes with tears did glisten.*

*Grace in gentle tones, quietly said, "I have something here for you.
I first began to provide for you, that which one time you did eschew.
Now, that you have experienced my saving power, I know you will agree,
That what I have to give you each day from God, cost much, but to you it is free."*

*Another voice of deeper tones, said, "I knew that you were lost.
For you to escape damnation in hell, there was going to be an awful cost.
So, when I saw what Jesus paid, I met truth, and we signed a pact.
Now I can assure you from God's holy word, your acceptance is a fact."*

*Another calm and reasonable voice said, "All that these have told you is true.
I met righteousness, and we kissed each other, full forgiveness is for you.
Rest in me," said peace so kindly, "I will always be by your side.
The Father who answered other's prayers for you, says you with Him will always abide."*

*Contented I rest as those three wonderful friends daily do their work for me.
I don't know now what tomorrow brings, "Whatever will be will be."
Truth and love bind these three friends together in sweetest harmony -
I will watch and wait with patience, until the face of my Lord I'll see.*

"Father, please help Thy servant to find my life a comfortable place for Thee to dwell with me. And when it is right, please open any door You want me to go through, whether it be here on earth to serve Thee, or the door to Thy house above. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ., Amen."

2nd John 4

THY CHILDREN

Often, we see people in far and distant places who we knew when they were young. We knew their parents and saw them grow up to be men and women, and now are far from their parents' home, raising their own families and living their lives in entirely different situations, and sometimes different cultures. What a joy it is to see them living honorable, useful lives and serving the Lord they came to know and believe on when they were young. We have been privileged to briefly share in some of their labors on mission fields and in other Gospel outreaches. To see God working through them and in them gives us the same kind of joy John had when he saw the elect lady's children walking in truth. Some we have had the privilege of pointing to Christ when they were children at home. Now they have children of their own and also have spiritual children entrusted to them by the Lord where they labor for Him. John knew the blessing it would be to pass on his joy to their mother.

Walking in truth doesn't happen by chance. When the truth of God is well taught and received by faith so that it is practiced in life, there is joy on the part of all who are involved. A deliberate teaching time is needed when people are first saved that they might be established in the faith and the fundamentals of the Christian life. Those first days, weeks and months of teaching establishes a basis for growth that leads to maturity as they learn to "walk in truth." It is the responsibility of older believers to teach truth in a way that people can distinguish between truth and error. Truth is given to walk in.

Children at home will often submit to parental leadership as long as they are under their parents' roof. They will follow their parents' teaching and practice, and may even participate in assembly activity as they have been taught. Then comes the time they leave home and we wonder what they will do when they are on their own. When the pressure of parental authority is gone, will they walk in the truth they have been taught? Some will have made those truths their own and other may even surpass those who have taught them in their understanding of scripture and in their devotion to the Lord and His work. Others reject and turn away from that which they were taught by saying, "I don't believe that anymore."

To whatever degree we can see our children walking in truth, we give God the glory and continue to pray for them and encourage them. When God saved them, we gave Him thanks. When they go further and are baptized, we give Him thanks. When they become participants in assembly life, we give Him thanks. When they marry a believer, who is faithful to the word of God we give God thanks. Walking in the truth is the pattern of life personally, daily and publicly under the authority of the commandments of the Father. It is our hope that they will continue to submit to "a commandment received from the Father."

In most ways, when they leave our home, our children have to be committed deliberately by us to the care and control of their heavenly Father. We teach them and then they move on in the way they choose - and hopefully in the way they were taught. It is always our prayer for them that they will commit themselves to be doctrinally right. We want their daily life to be of one habitually walking in the truth and committed to doing the will of God from their heart.

Our strongest support for our adult children is our own consistency to the word and will of God. They will be watching to see how we react to the pressures to conform to modern day thought, teaching and practice. We don't reject everything out of hand, but when false doctrine and a wrong appreciation of our Lord Jesus Christ by some person or persons arises, then we reject and repudiate that completely. Our example should be of godly living and responsible care for the people of God in spite of what others - maybe even our children, may do.

The joy we have when our children walk in truth is not because we are so great as parents and teachers, but that our children know the place of authority our Lord has in our lives. He has saved us by His grace, kept us daily by His grace and we love Him supremely. When they give that same to Him and to their children, that joy is shared by everyone involved. Truth lived out in everyday behavior brings joy. When our lives are testimonies to the truth, that joy is spread abroad.

*A mother looks down with joy
As her newborn looks up at her.
Very soon a pet or a simple toy
Takes its attention as change occurs.
But when maturity in our children comes
And adulthood fill up that space,
Joy in our child's true faith becomes
Much greater through evidence of saving grace.*

*The walk, in truth is a witness
To what was taught in their youth.
Words from our children that bless us
Testifies to their commitment to truth.
The commands from our heavenly Father
Are the guidelines by which they live.
The hearts of both father and mother
Are made joyful by the evidence they give.*

*Perhaps it is much more than we can expect
To think our children will follow our lead.
But the future is bright with the prospect
That to some of what we taught they give heed.
Joy here is one thing because we're grateful
That some of what we taught they have claimed.
Our prayer is that they remain faithful
And never ignore or dishonor Christ's name.*

"Father, I pray for my whole family right now. Grant that they will remember the God of their father and mother. May they retain respect for the Bible and Thee. May their doubts be settled by Thy truth, and may they be committed to walking in truth. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

2John. 4. "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment

from the Father.”

THE TRUTH WALK.

We are not left without guidance when it comes to what we believe. There is no uncertain sound about a commandment. It is not left up to me what I believe and practice. It has been spelled clearly out by the One who has given all the directives Himself and has graciously given them to us in written form. When it comes to the clear prohibitions and clear marching orders, there are no questions. The Father has given them and expects me to act on them in trust, knowing that He knows what is best in the affairs of life and service.

But now comes the challenge to me – am I walking in the truth? Truth is a possession to be treasured. Truth is precepts to be obeyed. Truth is a Person to be trusted. When I walk in this truth, there is joy to the mature believers who instructed me; there is joy to the person who cares most for me; there is joy in my own soul; there is joy to the Father who gave such truths in the beginning. The relationship of a spiritual father to his spiritual children, is one of care and concern lest the new believer gets sidetracked and unfruitful in the things God.

It is a constant charge to me to go again and again to my spiritual children to instruct them, guide them, encourage them and seek their spiritual well-being because when they step aside from God’s truth, not only are they losing blessings that could be theirs, but I am deprived of joy in my soul and God is deprived of glory that should be His.

“O Lord my God, help me to be a faithful minister of truth to those spiritual children you have given me. Help me not to quit seeking their best. Help me to be aware of what they need most. Help me to give to them what they need, when they need it. In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

2nd John 5,6

FROM THE BEGINNING

There are two basic themes in 2nd John - walking in truth and walking in love. Truth is the overriding theme as we are called to love in the truth and for the sake of the truth. Even the salutation to the elect lady and her children is linked with truth. Five times in the first four verses of this letter "truth" is spoken of, making us conscious of its importance. This is as true today as in the early days of the church age. Walking in the truth is the emphasis in verses four through six. There we find the commandment and love both tied together. The test of truth is in the next three verses and the defense of the truth concludes the epistle.

When one person "beseeches" another, this is not a command from one taking a lofty position above another, but is a communication between those of equal rank, at least in this particular context. We beseech a friend when we want to encourage or help them to come to a conclusion or take an action in some way. To pass on one’s opinion or thoughts in an effort to help another person is what we do when we beseech, rather than command or demand. Much of what we need to consider when making choices comes from a past history, or a reminder of what works because God is the One who initiated the statement and solution in the first place.

The command to love that was "from the beginning" as it relates to the Lord's people, was first given in the scripture in Leviticus 19:18. When our Lord spoke of it [Matt.22:37], He quoted that Old Testament passage. John wrote the same truth in his first epistle. It is possible for us to ignore or forget that which we know to be right. Perhaps the reason we would ignore the command to love is because it is inexpedient at the moment and would interfere with what we want for ourselves. Forgetting a charge is not uncommon when we are so busy about our own interests that it doesn't cross our minds that someone else needs us more. Then when we finish what we were involved in, it comes to our mind too late to do anything about the need.

In verse five we have the commandment given to love one another, and in verse six we have the fulfillment of that command - "we walk after His commandments." In verse five obedience expresses itself in "love one another." In verse six love finds expression in obedience. So, what does this really mean? Love is not mere sentimentality that sounds so nice when one says, "I love you." And love is not the opposite of being a servant. Love is demonstrated when our daily walk in life is one of obedience to our Lord and the truth of God as revealed in His word.

Love is not uncontrolled passion that shouts out its feelings to be broadcast to all who can hear. Love is obedience to God's commands. Love is unselfish service that we choose to do because we value the one to whom we give this expression. Love is an action rather than an emotion.

Love is shown when we consciously avoid prejudice. Love doesn't make any difference when it is demonstrated to people of different cultures, creeds, races, nationalities or ages. Love does not discriminate against those who may be more difficult to love than others. It may be shown in different ways to avoid unnecessary offense, but its motivation remains the same. We love in truth. Love will accept differences in personalities, and sometimes methods that are different than ours. It will accept people for who they are, not for what I want them to be. It does not say, "Everything would be fine if you would be like me and do everything my way," like some people imply.

Love is willing to listen and not interrupt. It is willing to give a difference of opinion the courtesy of listening to the whole matter before making a decision and/or a reply. Love helps when and where it can without being asked. It gives what it can, where it can and doesn't complain or boast about what it gave. Love looks for places to serve. It usually avoids the limelight although when that is imposed on it, it has little to say except "Thank you." Love wants all glory to go to our Lord. Love also refuses to compromise and/or do what is wrong so that no one is offended. Love and truth are divinely appointed and linked, and its characteristics are evident in one who walks in truth and love. Love doesn't pass judgment indiscriminately upon other people and other work that may differ from ours.

To know the commandment, to love and walk in truth is not enough. When our God gives commands, He has the right to expect us to put it into practice gladly. It is only right that it should be our joy to walk daily, and in every situation in obedience to His will.

*In the desert - close quarters - people hearing through their "canvas" walls
Each word heard - by those near - and by God - the tone of anxious calls
The reason - the hidden motive - the desired result on listening ear falls
"Love one another."*

*Around a supper fire - a busy day has ended - the Master speaks
Each one with a day's stories - wanting to be heard - self attention seeks
Then with quiet voice - authoritative - earnest looks at each one deep
"Love one another."*

*Activity abounds - things are moving - everyone attending to the work busily
Looking across at another's work - and passing judgment unfair - accusingly
"Stop, Think, Listen," - take time to consider what you, and they do - intelligently
"Love one another."*

*They came - they sat together - and sang and prayed - and testified
Heads bowed - hearts full - "Amen's" are real - joy is increasing - sanctified
Our Lord's name - His Person - His work - His word - glorified
"Love one another."*

"Gracious Father, I watched and smiled inside and out as the Lord's people shared in common their life in Christ after the meeting last night. And I believe I worshipped at the sight of Thy people loving one another - and I praise now at the remembrance of that sight. Amen."

2nd John 7

DECEIVERS.

How do we determine if people who have "entered into" our "world" of fellowship are true teachers of the word of God, or if they are "deceivers?" Deceivers are usually nice people who have attractive personalities, seem sincere, and quite likely are. They seem like believable people who are friendly and approachable. In that way they can get the attention they seek and gather people, usually Christians or professing Christians, to themselves. They will use Bible terms and illustrations and words that are familiar to Bible-believing Christians. However, they will often avoid easily understood teaching about our Lord Jesus Christ. "His teaching was good," they say. "He was one of the most influential people in human history," may be another comment. "O yes, we believe He was a god, or like God," is another comment false-teachers make. Not only are some fundamental words missing that describe our Lord who has come "to seek and to save that which was lost," but the way they live is an important test of what they believe and teach.

Evasive words about their past and also about who they know, where they have been and with whom they have been in fellowship, are reasons to be on our guard. Good and evil are often mixed in the way they look

at life and the world around. Long explanations about what God is like and how we approach Him are quite common. The attitude toward spiritual things and how we approach the truth of God is a sign of who they are. Anyone who tries to make God into a human-like person is to be questioned. We human are the ones who must be change to be like God. That is what "godly" means and is what God wants of us. In John's day a popular false teaching that was troubling God's people was that Jesus was God, but that He was not a true man. He was a spirit-form that looked and acted like a man. In our day a popular false teaching is that Jesus is only a man. They do not believe that He is God. Their teaching is that He was a good and remarkable man with lofty teaching, but He was just a man.

Any teaching that is not right about our Lord Jesus Christ must be emphatically rejected. False teachers today promote a non-biblical understanding of our Lord. Others have a compromising teaching about the Bible. Some parts of the Bible they will accept and others they reject because it does not suit their purpose and/or lifestyle. True, for most of us who do not know Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic, we read the scriptures in the language we normally speak. The truth that is contained in scripture does transfer to the language we speak with all the fundamentals of divine wisdom passed on to us through reliable translators. There are some who deliberately mistranslate words to suit their religious bias, but most Christian and Jewish translators are seriously committed to making sure they are passing on the meaning of the text from one language to another with accuracy. The point of translations is to make the unchangeable truths of the word of God understandable without compromising the doctrine and its original intent. False teachers manipulate scripture verses, and often isolate them to suit their own goal and avoid the context in which the Spirit of God gave them to us.

The word "deceivers" describes those people as "vagabonds" who have "gone forth" as on a mission and "are entered" among God's people to fulfill that mission. Not only do they not give a true understanding of Jesus, but they distort and undermine those truths that "are most surely believed among us." Often, they quote writers of books as those who give us the right meaning of things, but actually they change the meaning of biblical words to suit their opinion. To quote writers of books instead of passages of scripture is a signal that danger is near.

Deceivers are also "imposters" who seek to lead others to forsake what they have learned to be true from the Bible, and follow their interpretations. Most who deceive the people of God are very believable and seem (and may be are) to be sincere. But to be sincere doesn't make a thing right. It is not hard to be sincerely wrong. Open, honest and frank discussion with teachers is the best way to find out who they are and what they believe. Begin with determining what they think of Jesus and what they think regarding His Person, His life, death burial resurrection and His coming again.

The teaching we call "church truth," also needs to be examined because many today believe and teach that Christians who are in the church are spiritual Jews. The church of today is the Israel of the Old Testament continued under a new covenant. To false teachers, the ordinances of the Old Testament have been adapted to suit the universal church. The "local ecclesia" to many is a part of the whole dispensational church and is not an autonomous group of believers who gather in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ unto the Person of our Lord. Their "headquarters" tells them what to believe and practice. They gather "one the grounds (basic teaching) of the one body."

We know any believer in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior is a member of the one body of believers that was formed on the Day of Pentecost and is being "added to daily" by those who are born again all over the world. Christ is the Head and every believer saved by God's grace is "body of Christ" in the sense of basic material. The uniqueness of an assembly of believers in a community is they are all "body of Christ" and "members in particular." As a functioning organism similar to the universal church, all the parts needed for public testimony has been provided for by divine Persons who give gifts for the proper working of that local body of believers. Some would teach that every believer in an area is part of the local assembly whether they know it or not. We have been given church epistles and pastoral epistles to clarify the distinction between the dispensational church and the local assembly. A right understanding of those letters gives us the guidance we need.

When believers have some different opinions, we can still have a degree of fellowship in the things of God. When a person rejects teaching regarding our Lord Jesus Christ, we know who they really are and avoid them. Deceivers act against the people of God - against men. We can seek to correct them if they are willing to listen and pay heed to God's word. An anti-christ acts against God and we must reject both the teaching and the person lest we be a partaker of the evil they promote. If we are found in the presence of one who is against God, we must remove ourselves and by so-doing disassociate ourselves with them and what they are teaching and doing. We "go forth to preach the Gospel." They go forth to preach lies and false doctrine

and are spokes-persons for the devil. They do not usually look for unbelievers to capture but for Christians to deceive. Pay attention to both what a person does and what they say.

*How would I know truth or what is its meaning?
Is there as test to apply that falsehood would be revealing?
Yes, there is one major proof that is easy to apply –
Is Jesus Christ, God in the flesh – did He really come to die
For sinners and in His sacrifice for sin the way alone
That God will accept for sinners that He might their sins atone
And bring life to sinners that is eternal in its nature
Is it that simple, without a lot of nomenclature?*

*Yes, the doctrine of Christ has been made very clear –
He alone put away sin when on earth He did appear.
Any one coming with some strange or other way –
Is a deceiver and I must not to them attention pay.
To say, "God bless you," to one with a false message –
Would be to a wrong teaching or evil spirit pay my homage.
Christ, and Christ alone is the message men must bring,
And by teaching and life, I pass on what is the right thing.*

"Holy God, I know there are those around here who are trying to lead some of the younger Christians away from the plain teaching of Thy word to emotional and other kinds of experiences. I pray that there will be help given to those who oversee the flock of God to know what to say and how to say it, to keep these young lambs from the deceivers will devour them. The false teachers seem to major on how a person feels about things rather than what Thy Word teaches. Preserve the young I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

2nd John 8

FULLY REWARDED

There are dangers to day that may not seem too serious at first glance because they are hidden under the guise of Christian teaching. It is up to us to "Look to ourselves" first to discern whether what we hear from others is what we know to be the truth of God we have received. Don't complicate the truth. Keep your faith simple and pure according to the scriptural pattern we know, have experienced personally and have passed on to others who we serve. False teachers talk about truth and love, but practice it in non-biblical ways.

Words can be used but do not always mean the same thing in each matter. Even the tone of voice one uses can change the meaning of the whole comment. False teachers use Bible terms sometimes to sell products, distort facts or take control of a situation to their own advantage. When people use Bible words in ways to promote themselves and get ahead, they are actually perjuring themselves if it is not used in the way it is found in the scripture. To false teachers, integrity is foreign and their so-called credibility is of no value. To those people to tell the truth, even to "swear" to tell the truth means very little.

To those who would seek to gain a following or get some personal advantage, love is a word only, not a fact. Songs, stories and cards talk about love, but only mean unusual feelings of euphoria or sentimentality. The Christian life because of who Christ is, is a contrast to the prevailing values of self-worth and comfort instead of truth. Lies are part of the process of living in business, politics, some marriages and families. Now lies are moving into churches that are trying to gain members. Hopefully we guard against this in scripturally gathered assemblies.

Loyalty to our Lord is a commandment to know and live His truth and His kind of love. In this way we reflect our Savior and act with love toward His people. His kind of love extends to those who are not yet saved, so we also need to look upon those who need God's salvation with the compassionate love of a shepherd who sees the "multitudes as sheep without a shepherd." It is in that context we need to guard those things we have wrought, or those things which we have worked for.

The "full reward" is for those who value what has been brought to them through the Gospel being preached to them. In turn they too have gained much by their faithful service for the Lord. If we listen to false teachers and accept their way of teaching, and their opinions, we need to be conscious of the fact that "a little leaven,

leaveneth the whole lump. False teaching can have an effect on many people even if only one person gives heed to it.

John wanted a "full reward" at the judgment seat of Christ for his laborers in the Gospel and teaching on behalf of the elect lady and her children. He also wanted her to have a "full reward" from that which she had done in her life and service for the Lord. We all are producing something in our own lives and in our service for our Savior. When we do what we do as "unto the Lord" we are able to "glorify God in our bodies and spirits" which are His because He has bought us with His blood.

If for some reason I pay attention to what others say, and do more than what God's word teaches; I need to stop and "Look to [myself]." If I do not do that, I can be turned away from the truth of God that can be understood by simply taking God at His word, and I can lose that which I have gained in this life, even though it may have been in Christian service.

Persistence in labor, consistency in living and faithfulness to the Lord in spite of what others may say or do, will all pay off in the long run. If these things are really true in me, I will not be ashamed in this life nor at the Lord's coming. At the "bema," the judgment seat of Christ, I will not be embarrassed by my failures and carelessness. I must never allow God's truth to be contaminated by my neglect or wrong practices. So I must look to myself in view of being fully rewarded by having that which I can present to my Lord for His glory.

2nd John 8. *"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive and full reward."*

*What is it I think of when the lives of others I see?
Is it with a critical eye comparing who they are with me?
Or is it with spiritual discernment to see if there is evidence of faith?
Is the teaching they give the truth, given with love and grace?*

*Before looking at others and the things they do and say,
I need to "look to myself" and consider each and every day,
Lest all I have done in service, and said I truly believe
Is considered of no value, and there will be no reward received.*

*Rewards come to those who were faithful to God, and to His holy word.
Faithful men gave faithful words, which I believed when the Gospel I heard
They will be rewarded at the "bema" for they work for the Lord they have done,
And for the honor and glory they have brought to God the Son.*

*Rewards are for God's people when they are faithful in His service.
Some are in view of the future, and some now when our Father blesses.
Rewards at the judgment seat of Christ awaits us up ahead.
Anxiously we long to hear, "Well done," from our Lord, the exalted Head.*

*Careful consideration should be given to our work,
"Hands full of purpose" we should spread as on the people we look,
Making sure what I say I believe, and what I do are the same -
That positive results and glory will be given to His holy name.*

"Father, with reverence I ask that I will not seek credit nor self-glory for anything I do in Thy service. May it be indelibly impressed on my heart that I "look to myself" each day lest all that has been done that is of value from Thy work done through Thy servant, be tainted, compromised or lost through vain-glory. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

2nd John 9

THE TEST OF TRUST

The test of trust when it comes to listening to those who teach and preach, is not complicated. There is a clear line between truth and error that is not hard to discern if we are familiar with the teaching of the Bible. The Holy Spirit through "holy men of old" has given to us the scriptures by which we learn, listen and live. The canon of scripture has been tried and proven in the lives of millions of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

who have personally applied the truth of God to themselves. Some of the most noble people we know of have followed and practiced the word of God to their benefit and ours.

Those who "cross the line" of the bounds of the canon of scripture have "run ahead" and "transgressed the doctrine of Christ." "The faith" and "once for all been delivered to the saints." The doctrine of Christ is the body of truth to which we are committed to know and practice. To add to that or take from it, is indication that one who does so is not a Christian. To not abide or continue in that which is biblical, but deliberately transgress is evidence of a willful person who considers their opinion and teaching equal to, or more important than that which is of God.

When we follow and live in the doctrine of Christ and the truth taught in the Bible, we will be living and acting in ways that assure us of the presence and power of both the Father and the Son with us. To have the Father is to have the Son. The Holy Spirit within us and the Father and Son with us, gives us full trust even during the tests through which we have to pass.

False doctrine forsakes the first principles of the word of God and advances personal opinions as doctrines. Those who teach false doctrine indicate they know more than simple faith reveals to us. "True faith" comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Those who think this way claim to have new light heretofore hidden. Things previously unknown, they claim, have been taught to them by a new revelation. They think they have "gone further" and gone beyond what those who read the Bible and practice biblical truth know. That claim is transgression in its fundamental form.

True children of God are not to be influenced by this false teaching and should apply the test of truth to what people teach. Then, the test of truth should be given to those who teach it. Our trust is in the Father and the Son, not in the words of man's opinion.

*Give me the discernment of divine truth I pray.
Charge me to listen to God, not what men might say.
Help me to live out the doctrine of Christ each day -
That I might not sin against Thee.*

*Give Thy servant the wisdom to daily practice biblical truth.
Impress on my heart its necessity and its timeless worth.
May Thy servant be committed to sound Thy word forth -
That others might not sin against Thee.*

*Give me a clear view of Thee that I pass the test of trust.
Also, that others through me will realize that they must
Refuse to transgress or disobey the doctrine of Christ -
That all of us might not sin against Thee.*

"Father of truth and love: may the doctrine of Christ never be something I take for granted or in any way ignore. The importance of these two things are always on my mind lest I fail and fall. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

2nd John 10-11

TOLERANCE - INDIFFERENCE

The key issue of this epistle is how we are to deal with the false teachers? How are we to know whether one who comes among us is deliberately here to undermine the work of the Lord, sent by the God of this world? When one comes who denies the foundational truths of "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," is a false teacher. Any person who teaches wrongly about the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ is a false teacher.

False teaching is not merely an evil deed, it is a wicked work that goes way beyond an evil act. It has in view an on-going desire to claim the work of God for their own nefarious reasons. Often their approach is to "lead captive silly women" who fall for any new thing that promotes a feminist agenda instead of promoting the supreme authority of our Sovereign Lord. To invite such a person into one's home is basically approving of what they say and what they are doing.

In the opinion of some people today, we should be tolerant of anything so that no one will be offended. To not accept a person into one's home, to those who say they believe in tolerance toward everyone, this seems harsh and unchristian. Their thought is that we "should do good to all men," means that we should do what anyone wants. Discernment on our part is important because we are not "doing good" to a person if we

support their wrong-doing. Rather, we are doing the opposite. By accommodating to that which is wrong, we are helping evil to be propagated.

Not only are we not to have fellowship "with the unfruitful works of darkness," we are also not to support those who do those things in any way. To give financial, physical or moral support to an evil work makes us a participant in that work. We are enabling it to continue. The widow to whom John wrote this letter was likely noted for her hospitality among the Lord's people. She may have been inclined to receive anyone who came to her door.

None of us are to encourage a heretic or to promote and assist in any way their falsehood. There are those who solicit support on radio, television, letters in the mail or in personal visits. It is up to us to know those to whom we give our support and to know how it is going to be used. The objective of a true servant of God will not be obscure or without a stated goal. To even say, "God bless you" to such a person indicates we are behind what they are doing. We do not want God to bless evil and those who promote or do an evil work. Our concern for them is that they will face up to the fact that what they are doing is contradictory to the word of God, and repent and believe the Gospel.

Anyone who contradicts or in any way goes against the truth of God stated by precept or principle in the Bible, is not a Christian. As those who represent, and hopefully reflect Christ, we must never be disloyal to Him who is our Lord. We must not make it possible by our tolerance or indifference for error to harm the Lord's people. It is wrong, and we have sinned, if we help in any way a deceiver to be established in his false teaching. We can never have fellowship with wrong teaching by condoning it in any way.

Lack of conviction and lack of knowledge of the word of God leads to indifference and tolerance toward that which is evil. By our nature we want others to think well of us, so when we have to stand firm in the faith, we will find there are a lot of people who will accuse us of being hard, judgmental, intolerant and unchristian by their own definition. It may be simply that we are afraid of the consequences or that we will be charged with something that doesn't please the majority of people, so we keep silent, acquiescent or turn away in fear.

We must not tolerate wrong teaching, but with words of "grace seasoned with salt," we must declare what is right. When false teaching contradicts what is right it must be out-and-out rejected. To love truth means to hate error. To support those who teach, preach and practice the truth of God by opening our homes in hospitality is right. To ask God's blessing upon the labors of those who are known and proven to be faithful servants of our Lord Jesus Christ is right and important. When something appears to be questionable, it probably is. Before going any further in our support and encouragement of a person or work, we should make "diligent inquisition" of both the person and the purpose. In this day of tolerant acceptance of almost anything with the word "Christian" attached to it, we must take the time necessary to compare what a person says and is, with what the Bible says and we know to be true by experience.

*Sailing across the dark seas of a cold and wintery world,
Is the stately ship of truth with flags of grace, faith and truth unfurled.
The waves of opposition may make the ship occasionally toss and turn,
But a steady hand at the helm safely guides by things he has personally learned.*

*There are many rocks and shoals around which he must negotiate.
Another untested obstacle comes when another vessel he does meet.
"Ahoy," and "God bless" are words flowing freely from unknown lips,
But of major consideration is the opposite direction of both ships.*

*At first the words from the strange voice sounds good, the terminology is the same -
Until you speak of the Chief Captain, and in love and truth exalt His name.
The other voice comes back with words and phrases so very obscure,
That what he is pontificating and the message he gives leaves us unsure.*

*A few insightful questions begin to clarify the facts,
That what he has to say and talk about isn't how he acts.
He is looking for a place to fill and people to follow him.
That's when we realize to have fellowship with him is sin.*

It is not enough for us to know what's right - we must avoid the wrong.

*When pressure is applied to be tolerant of all, be firm in Christ, stand strong.
Have naught to do with the man or the teaching that does not exalt our Lord
When others are indifferent, you remain solidly committed to obeying God's word.*

"Father, it is with a certain sense of loss that I learn of those who once seemed committed to Thy Word, Thy house, and Thy people, but now have walked away from that which they professed to believe. It would be wonderful if in some way you would bring to pass something that would cause them to stop, repent and return. Even as I pray now, I am aware that I am weak and feeble, and maybe not strong enough to resist what tempted them. Grant to Thy servant that I would be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

2nd John 12-13

COMMUNICATION

Much of meaningful human experience is involved with our ability to communicate with other people. Facial expressions, tone of voice, inflections and gestures, particularly hand motions all communicate to others our thoughts and intentions to a limited extent. Written words communicate precise thoughts and are probably the most trustworthy way of giving information. That is why the written word of God is so important to our spiritual life and growth. Written words can be read over and over again until we know exactly what is meant. The combination of written words and visible expressions give a deeper sense of the meaning when the words are read well.

Some people try to communicate with animals and spend a lifetime seeking ways to cross the boundaries of one specie to another. That may be helpful to a certain extent when training horses to work, cows to come to the right barn, dogs and cats to be suitable pets when we realize God said, "The fear of you and dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth." But dominion over others is not meaningful communication. That is one-way communication produced by training and reaction to fear.

To pass on truth and love requires ways to communicate emotions both joyful and serious. When there are people in whom we have special interest such as parents and children or special friends, we will seek to keep connected with them in every way possible. A phone call when we think of them may be unexpected, but will be great appreciated simply because the person you call knows you care about them. An email or text from time to time with some written thoughts regarding a passage of scripture, or a subject of your meditation may be just what is needed to challenge someone to press on in faith. A letter with news and encouragement can be read over and over perhaps meeting a need of which you not be, or ever will be, aware.

However, when one meets another brother or sister face to face, that is a very special time and we are able to "impart" some blessing that is expressed in words, expression and time taken to connect. It is not usually a waste of time to pay a personal visit to a person we know. There is a joy that accompanies a person to person contact that is more than just fellowship. It is communion. John wanted to have that special contact with the elect lady and her children. A visit is not dispassionate like work written with ink on a piece of paper. Such a contact uses all the senses to our expressions of interest. A cup of tea or coffee, a meal together, a prayer, a hymn or spiritual song, and a discussion over a passage of scripture enlightens the whole person - body, soul and spirit.

A handshake or touch on the shoulder uses the sense of touch to indicate, "I am glad to see you. You are important to me." The sense of smell associated with a meal or beverage is a way one says, "I am glad you came." Implied in sharing physical food is the expression of unity and fellowship. A smile on one's face or the concern shown visibly expresses empathy with the situation in which another is found. To hear a person speak testifies to the fact of personal worth because you have taken time to talk and listen.

Brief words in a letter are important. So is time taken to write the letter thoughtfully. When one's personal, physical presence is seen, the whole process of communication goes to a higher level. In times of loss, another person's presence is of great significance. In times of joy and/or victory, to share that joy makes it even more valuable to one experiencing it. When suffering is great and burdens are heavy, the mere face of another person being there is enough - maybe even better than too many words.

When God's people are confronted with false teaching, it is a serious situation. We dare not consider it lightly or overlook it because it can have a negative effect on many people. Never treat false teaching as if it is a light matter. It is up to us to refuse any and all heresies or give it a place of any kind. "If you give it an inch, it will take a mile." There are serious dangers and consequences to falsehood and false teaching. How thankful we should be that there are those who care enough for our souls and that of our children, that they

do not hesitate to warn us. The nieces and/or nephews, children of the elect lady's sister, had an interest and concern for the aunt and her family. It is important for us all to take every opportunity to let loved ones know how important they are to us.

*Two families sharing a common heritage are a good lesson to us.
The characteristics have some similarities that elicit from us our trust.
The same holds true in the family of God even though we are in different places.
Our heavenly Father wants His image to be seen, even in all of our faces.*

*To care enough to communicate in ways to those for whom we care.
Lets them know our love and truth are real which we with them want to share.
In as many ways as are available to us, let us use them to the blessing of others.
After all, in the family of God we are in, all the saints are sisters and brothers.*

*Count it a privilege to communicate, use meaningful words, not just a quick; "How are you?"
Something about yourselves, about your Lord, and how you think of them is very important too.
Sincere concern, words of praise, thoughts of encouragement are always in style.
When you get a chance, go visit them; when you're there walk with them "the extra mile."*

*What you do for others, you do for the Lord - He takes it as done unto Him.
By showing real interest at personal cost, you are able their confidence to win.
Then when the time comes and correction is needed, they will heed it because it is you
Who has shown in the past it is not stones that you cast, your interest in them is true.*

"Heavenly Father, at the end of this study in 2nd John, I want to thank Thee for giving me some insight as to how I can encourage and warn God's people at the same time. I am asking that I will be able to actually practice and promote what I have learned, by the power of the Holy Spirit and by making the necessary changes that I can. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."