

We're in a little series of one-chapter-books at the moment.

- Last week – Philemon;
- This week – 2 John;
- Next week – 3 John;
- after Christmas – Jude.

So, 2 John: It's a very short letter, and so I might just read it myself today. But before I do, I want to share 2 things that may help us to understand it a whole lot better.

The first thing, is the Address. The address, is to the elect lady and her children. Who is this “elect lady”? There is no lady. It's a metaphor.

- The “elect lady”, is a church.
- And her children, are the Christians who make up that church.
- And her home, is the gathering **of** the church.

Are you with me?

And so when he says at the end, “The children of your elect sister greet you.” What's he saying? “The people of the church here where **I** am, send you their greetings.”

So, that's the first thing. The second thing, is there's a few repeated words that drive the message of this letter home.

I've highlighted them in the reading, but for those who are listening to the recording, those words are: Love; Truth; Christ; and Command/ment.

## 2John

<sup>1</sup> The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I **love** in **truth**, and not only I, but also all who know the **truth**, <sup>2</sup> because of the **truth** that abides in us and will be with us forever:

<sup>3</sup> Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus **Christ** the Father's Son, in **truth** and **love**.

<sup>4</sup> I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the **truth**, just as we were **commanded** by the Father. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> And this is **love**, that we walk according to his **commandments**; this is the **commandment**, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it. <sup>7</sup> 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 anti**christ**.

<sup>8</sup> Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.

<sup>9</sup> Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in

the teaching of **Christ**, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. <sup>10</sup> If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, <sup>11</sup> for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> The children of your elect sister greet you.

When I look back over my life in the church (from the time I was a child, through until now), I can't do so, without a tinge of sadness.

*I think of my youth group days, and I think of my mate, who at a Scripture Union canoe camp, with tears in his eyes, gave his life to Jesus.... It was a real time of joy. But about 5 years later he told me, "I don't believe that any more." ....*

*I think of a teenager I baptised, and how he pledged himself to Jesus... But now, there is no evidence that he continues to walk with Jesus....*

*I think of an older man, who is still active in his church today, and he's had a history of being active in supporting Sunday school and Youth Groups throughout his life,,,, but now, even though he claims to be a Christian, he calls himself a "Progressive Christian". And he doesn't believe:*

- *Jesus was born of a virgin;*
- *He was raised from the dead;*
- *The Day of Judgment is coming;*
- *He doesn't even believe that Jesus is God;*
- *in fact, he doesn't believe in God as we believe in God...*

What about you? Who do you remember, who no longer walks with Christ? (They once did, but not anymore)???

.....

So for me, I'm filled with joy when I remember all those who walk with Jesus... He's their life – He's there everything... But there's always this tinge of sadness for those who no longer walk with Jesus.

And often, the reason they no longer follow Jesus, is because of one of these four words:

- Love
- Truth
- Christ
- Command

One or more of those, they cannot abide.

But the thing is, we usually think of those who no longer walk with Jesus, as those who have completely lost their faith and dropped out of fellowship, but in this letter, John's talking

about people within the church. They don't walk in truth, and they don't walk in the commandments of God.

Some have a problem with "love"... They don't understand that Christian love is an action. It's not an emotion or a feeling – it's an action.

And **we** love, because Christ loved us first... **We** have experienced the love; the mercy; the grace; and the peace of Christ... And so we also love and are gracious and merciful. And because Godly Love is not a feeling or an emotion, it's something that can be **commanded**. We are commanded to love one another...

Some folk cannot do that... Some leave the church; Some stop walking with Christ altogether, because they cannot bear to be in a church with a certain person or a certain type of person.

If there was one word that would describe the message of the Apostle John (which is the message of Jesus), it would be "love".

1 John 3:11 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

1 John 3:23 (ESV)

<sup>23</sup> And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.

1 John 4:7 (ESV)

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

1 John 4:11 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 4:12 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

1 John 3:18 (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

In this letter, John reminds us, “It’s not a new commandment – it’s been around from the start. That we love one another....

Love. Loving others, even those we don’t like, and even those the world would see as being ‘unlovely’, is what John wants us to know, is the way of Christ. Love.

For some, that's a deal-breaker — I cannot love that person.

A second barrier for some, is “truth”. Some stop walking with Jesus because they cannot handle truth.

*Of course we've got to throw in a bit of Jack Nicholson here: “Truth? You want the truth? You can't handle the truth!!!”*

Truth is more than a concept. Truth is a person. Jesus said, “I am the truth”.

It was John himself (the disciple whom Jesus loved), who recorded the words of Jesus:

John 14:6-7 (ESV)

<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

To walk in truth, is to walk in Christ, and to walk in Christ, is to walk in truth. It is one and the same.

But how do we know what **is** truth? When Jesus stood before Pilate, he scoffed, “What is truth?” Well, truth is what Jesus came to bear witness to. God has revealed His truth – the God-person of Christ....

And love and truth goes together. Sometimes, in the name of “love”, **truth** goes out the window... That’s not real love.

Sometimes in the name of “truth”, **love** goes out the window... That’s not real truth.

Love and truth go together, as Christ and truth are one.

So, John tells us, he loves other Christians in truth (in Christ); In fact (he tells us), **all** who know the truth (all who know Christ Jesus) love other Christians in truth (in Christ);

How? How do we love? <sup>2</sup> **because ... the truth ... abides in us and will be with us forever:** Who is in us and will be with us forever? Christ. We love our brothers and sisters in Christ **because of [Christ who] abides in us and will be with us forever**

That’s the thing about truth. Truth never changes – it’s with us forever.

We live in a generation who would say the opposite to that. “*My truth can be different to your truth*”. What a load of rot.

God’s Word is truth. Jesus Christ is truth. Unchanging...

God has revealed His truth. And to walk in the truth, is something that we are **commanded** to do. We are not free to believe or to disbelieve the bits we choose; We are not free to obey or disobey the bits we choose...



V4 is what I call, “a cutting encouragement”:

John said:

<sup>4</sup>I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.

Do you understand what he’s saying there? I was so happy to see a few folk in the church are walking in the truth.... What does that say about the rest of them?

Not most of you’s... Not a united following of Christ in truth... Some of you are walking in the truth...

What a terrible indictment on a church (cutting encouragement). Rather than sticking to the truth that God has revealed in Christ, some folk in their human wisdom, want to change it, (add to it, or take away from it), It’s like making a religious stew...

*I’ve never been a real fan of stew, but with certain cuts of meat, you’ve either gotta mince it or stew it, and you can only eat so much mince.*

*But when I cook up a stew, I like to come up with my own concoction. I raid the herb garden and pick a bunch of herbs. I raid the spice shelf and try a few different spices each time.... I don’t want it the same each time. I like to try something different. – a little taste of this/that...*

And some folk are like that with their faith. They begin with the truth, and “I might leave that bit out; And I might add this flavour”...

And it seems that the specific departure from truth that John is addressing here, is to do with Christ Himself. And those who have departed from the truth, he calls them “deceivers”, and “antichrist”. They oppose Christ...

They did not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh.

Now, the Greek word used here for “coming”, is in the present tense. It’s sort of like a timeless coming. It could refer to them:

- not believing that Jesus is the Son of God, and He came and dwelled on this earth;
- not believing the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. Jesus isn’t coming again as the judge. Don’t worry about it;
- His timeless presence with us now...
- or it could mean all of those things.

*I guess the easiest example I could give you today, would be the JW. They do not believe that Jesus is the Christ – the Son of God. They don’t believe that Jesus is God, who came in the flesh (angel).*

*Or perhaps the so-called “progressive Christians”. They do not believe in the Godness of Jesus... (as we understand God). They completely distort the Gospel so that it represents humanism rather than a powerful eternal Loving God...*

Deceivers. Antichrists. They’ve gone out into the world. He’s describing them as missionaries. There were **many** in John’s day, and there are **many** in our day, who go out into the world as missionaries... They fully believe their own message,,, but the reality is, because they have departed from the truth, and made up their own religious stew, they are deceivers and antichrist....

In V9 John says: <sup>9</sup> Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God.

The image he’s giving us here, is of those who would say, “*Christianity is a developing thing*”. He’s describing those who see themselves as:

- the progressives;
- the advanced thinkers;
- those who are more spiritual;
- accessing a deeper revelation from God that we can add to the faith.

In John’s day, it was the “Gnostics” – they believed they had a secret knowledge. And it’s the same today.

“Those **who go on ahead**”, we might think is a good thing. No. He’s using it in a derogatory way – they go beyond the

truth revealed by God, and decide for themselves their own truth...

*("It doesn't matter what the Bible says. God has revealed this to me. I have revelation. God spoke to me.")*

Well, they may claim to preach an advanced form of Christianity, but if they do not abide in the teaching of Christ, they do not have God...

And the warning that John gives, is a severe one. He says:

**<sup>8</sup> Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose [destroy] what we have worked for, but may win [receive] a full reward.**

Who's the "we" who have worked? It's the apostles; preachers; evangelists; teachers – those who have been fruitful in the teaching of Christ, and worked hard for preaching the true gospel. And at one time the church he's writing to, had listened to them, and believed, and come to faith... But now they're listening to deceivers, and their faith in Christ and His truth are in peril. Their belief in truth is being destroyed...

The apostles and preachers had laboured hard to build their faith, and now it's being destroyed...

I give thanks for those who have worked hard, that I might have faith and receive eternal life.

- My parents
- Sunday School teachers
- Youth Group leaders
- camp leaders

- preachers and teachers

I have learned from, have put effort into me, and they've urged me to keep my feet following/walking in the ways of Christ... Why? For growth of faith in Christ, and that I might receive the eternal blessing...

And that's true for you too, isn't it??? Those who have worked hard over the years, that we who abide in the teaching of Christ, would receive the eternal reward.

Now, the teaching of Christ, what is it? Well, it's what Christ taught. **And** it's what the Scriptures teach us about Christ.

And:  
**Whoever abides in the teaching** [what teaching? The teaching of Christ] **has both the Father and the Son.**

We might often hear the phrase "They're not a Christian, but they're a very spiritual person", as if that makes them close to God... And it's become quite fashionable to say "It doesn't matter which god one worships – there is only one god – they're all the same." What a load of hogwash... The only way to the Father is through the Son.

And it's so important that the teaching of the church keep Christ, and the truth of Christ, central to the Gospel we preach. So much so, that John says "If **anyone** comes to you with a different teaching, don't let him into your house, and don't welcome him..."

Remember, when he's talking about the "house" he's talking about the gathered church...

I once used to be in a denomination that had the attitude, "*We're an open and progressive church. We allow a wide range of teachings, and we can let the people sort it out for themselves.*" The apostle John wouldn't have a bar of that. He says: He says that if you welcome the deceiver into your church, that's taking part in his wicked works.

And so Christ,

- (God the Son)
- God who came in the flesh as a human;
- Christ Jesus, who died on the cross and rose again;
- Christ who is in us by His Holy Spirit, and
- Christ Jesus, who is returning again (to judge the living and the dead),

is what distinguishes Christianity...

And that's why we are **commanded**.

Some reject Christianity because they will not be told. "*Christianity, it's about freedom not commandments*"... But in Christ, we are free, to obediently keep His commandments..

We've been commanded to walk in truth. What a wonderful thing that is, to walk in truth (not getting all befuddled by lies). And His greatest command is to love.

Just as Christ and truth are interchangeable, love and the commandments of God, are also one. The commandment, is to love. <sup>6</sup> **And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments**

Wasn't it Jesus who said,  
The greatest command is to love the Lord Your God with all your heart, soul and mind.?

You shall also love your neighbour as yourself, and

**Matthew 22:40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."**

If I don't keep the commandments of God, then I'm not loving as I should. And if I don't love, then I'm not keeping the commandments of God as I should.

So, there you go:

A short letter, but filled with truth, and filled with love, pointing us to Christ Jesus, who came in the flesh...

History has it, that the Apostle John, was the last surviving Apostle, And those who loved Jesus, would hang on every word he said. He was the last of the 12 who could speak from 1<sup>st</sup> hand knowledge of Jesus' teaching...

And I pray that we would remain "children who walk in the Truth". I pray that we would walk in His command (not a new command – the age-old command), to love. And that we would constantly focus on our Lord Jesus

Christ, (The one who came in the flesh, and is coming again.)

Short letter. Short Prayer.

Amen.