

2 John 1-13

INTRODUCTION: When my wife Carolyn and I were recently in England, we had the opportunity to visit Hartland Abbey in Devon.

This Abbey was an Augustinian monastery that was built in the 1160 A.D. It remained a monastery until 1539 when it was finally dissolved by King Henry VIII.

Monks walked the halls of the Abbey for 378 years.

Did you know that monks were given very specific instructions on how to answer the door when someone knocked on the door of the monastery?

The porter in charge of answering the door is to sleep near the entrance to the monastery so he can hear and respond in a timely way when someone knocks.

It was his job to open the door when someone knocks.

The porter is to offer a welcome, in Benedict's words, "with all the gentleness that comes from reverence of God," and "with the warmth of love."

As soon as anyone knocks, the porter is to reply, "Thanks be to God. God bless you . . ."

He is to say this before he even knows who's on the other side of the door.

And then the porter is to make sure that the other monks know of the presence of a visitor in their midst so that they can join in extending a welcome.

One ancient monastic author noted, "The way we answer doors is the way we deal with the world."

John would agree that how we answer the door when someone knocks is important.

But John would disagree with the way the monks offered a blessing to the person who knocked on the door before they even knew who it was.

In fact in 2 John verse 10-11 John says that if a religious teacher knocks on your door and they don't believe what John has been teaching about Jesus Christ, don't let them into your house.

Don't even bid them God's speed. Don't even say "God bless you or God be with you. . . "

WHY? This might sound harsh to us. It might sound unloving. But John is going to show us how love must be discerning.

How does love relate to the truth?

Does love deny or ignore the truth?

Do people love because of the truth or in spite of it?

Truth and love - how can we hold them together?

QUOTE: Ray Stedman has commented, " . . . there are those of us who make the mistake of emphasizing love at the expense of truth. They feel that we should accept everyone and everything, being tolerant in all directions."

ILLUSTRATION: He goes on to relate a story told by Dr. H. A. Ironside about the man who came to church, and on the way out, as he shook hands with the pastor one Sunday morning, said to him, "Oh Pastor, I want to tell you what a blessing you've been to me since you've been pastor of this church. Why, when I first started here, I didn't have any regard for God, man or the devil. But since you came, I've learned to love all three."

True Biblical love does not welcome the devil and his lies.

This little epistle teaches us how we are to hold on to both truth and love.

Truth without Love is cruelty
Love without Truth is compromise
Truth and Love that is conviction

AUTHOR: John wrote this epistle. As you can see it is a very short letter.

Second John is the second shortest book in the New Testament. It has only 245 words in the Greek text and would have easily fit on a single piece of papyrus. Today we might call it (and 3 John) a “postcard epistle.”¹

v.1 – John identifies himself as the elder.

John doesn't bother to give his name because those who receive the letter are very familiar with him.

Elder – presbuteros and it simply means “old man or aged man.”

John is very old when he wrote this, however, John was not referring to his age.

The word usually referred to the office of an elder or pastor. It is a NT term borrowed from the OT which referred to an official leadership position.

Normally the older men were the leaders thus elder became synonymous with leadership or oversight.

Elder in the NT means an overseer. Elders and Pastors are called to oversee the church.

This is a personal letter but John in the very beginning emphasizes his spiritual authority!

¹Akin, Daniel L.: *1, 2, 3 John*. electronic ed. Nashville : Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001 (Logos Library System; The New American Commentary 38), S. 217

Why?

In the letter, he is going to gently and lovingly correct someone and warn them for wrong action.

Pastors are accountable to God as under-shepherds and must at times use correction.

Sometimes people don't respond well to correction and must be reminded that pastors have that authority.

Recipient: “unto the elect lady and her children...”

Who is this elect lady? Generally two views.

1. Literal view – John is writing to a woman and her children.

2. Figurative view – John is writing to a church and believers in the church. The “elect lady” is a figurative term for the church and “her children” are believers in the church.

Others have said the elect lady is actually the church at Babylon...don't ask me where that came from.

Others say this is an unnamed local church.

Others say it's Mary the mother of Jesus.

Others say it's Martha.

Others say it's a lady named Electa, to the Electa lady.

Others say it's a lady named Kuria, to the elect Kuria.

Where do they get all that? Nowhere.

This is a personal letter parallel to 3 John which is written from the elder to the beloved Gaius.

I believe the literal view is correct for several reasons.

1. Because of the simplicity of the letter.

The whole form of the letter is the form of a first century personal letter.

EXPLANATION: One scholar noted: “No other NT epistle, not even Philemon has so much the form of a Hellenistic private letter as 2 and 3 John.”

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: A first century letter, whether Christian or non-Christian, was different in form and structure from modern correspondence.

Actually, the ancient pattern makes more sense because it identified the author at the outset.

Jewish or Greek, an ancient epistle began with a salutation or word of introduction that followed a threefold formula of:

- (1) the name of the sender,
- (2) the name of the recipient, and
- (3) a word of greeting.

The salutation was by no means merely perfunctory or insignificant. It would often establish the mood of the epistle and contain in “seed form” major themes or concerns the author wished to address.²

The letter here is very personal in it's tone. It is different from 1 John which was written to a church.

2. John refers to having met some of this woman's children (v. 4).

3. John mentions her sister's children (v. 13). If you take a figurative view who does this represent?

4. John refers to the elect lady's house (v. 10).

5. No where in the NT are believer's referred to as children of the church!

Believers are children of God. Church is a bride.

6. It is too brief to be a letter to a church.

²Akin, Daniel L.: 1, 2, 3 *John*. electronic ed. Nashville : Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001 (Logos Library System; The New American Commentary 38), S. 218

And furthermore, the letter is too brief to have been written to a church.

You wouldn't find a letter written to a church this brief.

Letters that are written to people are brief, like Philemon.

The only brief letter that you have that is addressed to more than one individual is Jude's letter and it's at least twice this long.

To call her elect is simply to identify this lady as belonging to God.

PURPOSE: What was John's purpose in writing?

This is a short letter but it has a important message. Sometimes the most powerful messages are like short strong trumpet blasts.

Some scholars feel this letter was a response to a letter this woman wrote John inquiring about how she should respond when a traveling preacher or missionary came to her door preaching a different gospel or teaching a different doctrine.

What was her Christian obligation to someone who was not teaching and preaching the truth as she learned it?

How do I balance out truth and love?

The Practice of Private Hospitality

Hospitality was widely recognized as a virtue in the early centuries. This is especially true for believers.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 13:2** Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

In fact the Greek word for “hospitality” was “philo-love xenos-stranger “love of a stranger”

Romans 12:13 says we are to practice hospitality to strangers.

And Peter had said, no less than Peter, the leader of the Apostles, "Be hospitable to one another without complaint," 1 Peter 4:9. In other words, do it without complaining that you're having to do it.

And, in fact, 1 Timothy 5, it was the Apostle Paul who wrote that a woman couldn't even be put on the list of widows in the church when her husband died if she hasn't shown hospitality to strangers.

And also, by the way, 1 Timothy 3:2 says, "You can't even be an elder or a pastor in the church if you don't have hospitality."

So, early Christians were very hospitable to all.

The Roman empire engineered a well-organized and well-built system of paved roads throughout the empire.

This made traveling very easy.

Preachers and missionaries took advantage of these roads and traveled throughout the empire establishing churches and preaching the gospel.

You'll notice in the book of Acts that Paul established churches along these main trade routes.

Roman roads and inns made traveling easy. The inns however did not have a good reputation.

Inns were brothels, places of disease, unacceptable unless one was in desperate need.

And those who preached the gospel along with any other traveling teachers were itinerant, moving all over everywhere and depending upon hospitality.

Traveling missionaries would prefer to avail themselves of the hospitality of other believers.

N.T. vocabulary of hospitality.

In the NT there was a vocabulary developed to describe a hospitable reception.

Lambano, dechomai, (receiving) and propempe (sending) of those who spread the faith.

Needless to say this practice was abused.

ILLUSTRATION: Didache

The **Didache** ([Koine Greek](#): Διδαχή, *Didachē*, meaning "Teaching"^[1]; IPA: /ˈdɪdəkiː/ in English, IPA: [ð̞ið̞aˈxi] in [Modern Greek](#)) is the common name of a brief [early Christian treatise](#) (dated by most scholars to the late first/early second century^[2]), containing instructions for Christian communities. The text, parts of which may have constituted the first written [catechism](#), has three main sections dealing with Christian lessons, rituals such as [baptism](#) and [eucharist](#), and Church organization.

It dealt with this problem of abusing hospitality. It even coined a term called "Christmonger" to those who attempted to profit by Christianity.

It reads:

"About apostles and prophets, follow the rule of the Gospel, which is this: Let every apostle who comes to you be welcomed as the Lord. But he shall not stay more than one day, and if it is necessary the next day also.

But if he stays three days he is a false prophet. And when an apostle leaves. Let him take nothing except bread to last until he finds his next lodging. But if he asks for money he is a false prophet...Let everyone who comes to you in the name of the Lord be welcomed, and after ward when you have tested him

you will know him, for you will have an understanding of true and false.”

You remember when Jesus sent out the Twelve, you remember that two by two in Galilee?

He gave them some criteria by which to determine what homes they were going to stay in and how to deal with that.

And then when he sent out the 70 two by two later on he gave them the same kind of instruction about where they would stay and where they wouldn't stay and to go to a place and if you were received there to remain there, and so forth.

That was pretty much how it worked. You traveled around and you preached and somebody showed you hospitality.

The problem John addresses in this letter is that this woman had been receiving false prophets into her home in the name of Christian love.

John writes to correct her actions.

She had the best of intentions but her actions were wrong. She was ignorantly doing the wrong thing, not intentionally.

John needed to gently correct her.

So, this letter can be divided into three sections.

The Greeting vv. 1-4

An Exhortation vv. 5-6

A Warning vv. 7-13

John corrects her behavior but does it in an encouraging way.

TRANSITIONAL SENTENCE: Notice three encouragements for this woman.

I. A Word of Commendation: Walk in Truth. (vv.1-4)

Ancient letters opened with a greeting in the very beginning.

The greeting many times would contain in seed form the major theme or concern of the letter.

Notice that right off John commends her for being a woman of truth.

What are the evidences in this greeting that she walked in truth.

A. Testimony of Her Character. (v. 1a, 2)

John loved this woman with a wholesome Christian love.

Notice how he says it “whom I love in the truth.” He loved her that way a Christian should love another in truth.

He loved her because she was a woman who walked in truth.

This is one of John's favorite expressions of a true believer.

1 John 1:8, 2:4, 2:21, 3:19; 3 John 1:4

John uses the word "truth" four times in this greeting.

A believer is someone who knows the truth and walks accordingly.

"for the truth's sake" – John is saying I am writing to defend the truth. John says I am writing because I want to protect the truth.

v. 2 - dwell – meno This is the whole basis of that bond. The truth dwells inside of us.

John's love for her is because there is a bond that exists between believers who walk in truth.

1 John 5:1-3

B. Testimony of Her Church.

"not I only but also all they that have known the truth..."

Other believer's loved this woman because she loved and walked in truth.

Again truth is the unifying factor in the church.

EXPLANATION: John says, "Look, I love in the truth, we all love each other who know the truth and we do it for the sake of the truth."

All of our Christian love, all of our Christian fellowship is to manifest the power of the truth.

This is the benchmark of our Christian faith. It's by this that all men know that we are His disciples, if we have love one for another.

It is this remarkable common love because we share a common life in the truth that manifests the glory of the power of the gospel.

C. Testimony of Her Children

NOTICE v. 4

John commends this woman because her children also walk in truth.

He says, "I was very glad," literally, "This is overjoyed, I was exuberant, rejoicing greatly to find," literally, "I have found."

It's the Greek word *eureka...eureka* which gets transliterated into English for the same reason, I found, same translation.

I have found perhaps personal contact with some of these children, perhaps through the sister mentioned in verse 13.

But what did John find? Some of your children walking in truth.

The fact that John commends her testifies to the fact that it was because of her life.

Her walk impacted her children and now they walk in truth.

There is no mention of a father or a man in this passage.

One of three reasons:

1, She may have had an unsaved husband.

Yet she was still able to raise godly children.

2. She may have been a widow.

In this case she was left to herself to raise her children in the things of God.

3. She may be a divorced woman. (abandonment)

It could be that her commitment to Christ caused a spilt in her marriage and her husband walked out and didn't want anything to do with it.

No matter the circumstances we admire her because she walked in the truth in such a way as to impact the lives of her children.

Not only:

I. A Word of Commendation: Walk in Truth. (vv.1-4)

But notice also:

II. A Word of Challenge: Walk in Love. (vv. 5-6)

John not only commends this woman for walking in truth, he challenges her to continue walking in love.

A. The Continuation of Love. (v. 5)

It is obvious by the letter that this was a woman who was given to hospitality.

She was walking in love. John does not want to discourage her from doing good.

He is not telling her to do something she has not be previously doing.

He encourages her to keep it up.

Verse 5 sounds like what we have already heard in 1 John 2:7-11

John is saying the same exact thing.

The word for new is *kainos* new in quality. It is not *chronos* new in time.

Love was taught in the Old Testament but is had a new emphasis in Christ, a new experience for the believer in that we now have the Holy Spirit within us helping us love.

Romans 5:5, "The love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts."

This is new.

The fruit of the Spirit is...what's the first one, love. You now have a new comprehension of love, not only by the example of Christ, but by the indwelling of the Spirit.

The work of New Covenant grace has granted to the believer the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And with the coming of the Holy Spirit comes an experience and a comprehension of love heretofore not experienced, not known in that degree of fullness.

1 Thessalonians, I think one of the really rich statements of the New Testament, 1 Thessalonians 4:9, "As to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write you for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another."
What a statement.

You don't need a lecture on love, you're taught by God to do it.

That's why John can say, "On the one hand it's not new, on the other hand, it is new.

There's a dimension of it that's never been seen before you are taught of God on the inside to love.

John encourages her to continue in love.

B. The Clarification of Love. (v. 6)

Here John links truth and love together. He is saying you can only really love in truth.

Our love is defined by the Word of God. Love does not go beyond the boundary of truth.

John subtly linked truth and love together in the greeting in verses 1-3, especially verse 3.

Principle: There are limits on love.

You can't say you are acting in love if you are disobeying the commandments of God.

If you are violating the truth or sinning against the truth that is not love.

ILLUSTRATION: Here are two young people who are immoral and violate God's commandment to be pure and say well it is love.

No it's is lust. It is self-love but not true Christian love.

Here John set limits on love and the limits on our loving are set by the Scripture.

You can't say you're loving someone when you treat them sinfully, or when you engage in sinful attitudes or sinful tolerances, or sinful compromises with them.

You can only truly love in absolute obedience to the Word of God.

You must know the Word of God then in order to love God according to His revelation and to love each other according to His revelation.

You have then to be loyal to the truth.

Not only:

I. A Word of Commendation: Walk in Truth. (vv.1-4)

II. A Word of Challenge: Walk in Love. (vv. 5-6)

But notice also:

III. A Word of Caution: Walk in Truth and Love (vv. 7-13)

v. 7 - Here John warns that we must beware of the deceiver.

The NT is full of warnings about the deceiver.

^{ESV} **2 Peter 2:1** But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³ And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

^{ESV} **1 John 4:1** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.

^{ESV} **1 Thessalonians 5:21** but test everything; hold fast what is good.

^{KJV} **1 Corinthians 14:29** Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.

^{ESV} **Revelation 2:2** "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

Everywhere the gospel has gone Satan send deceivers.

v. 7 “many deceivers have gone out into the world...”

There are many deceivers, *planos* from which we get the word planet, meaning a wanderer.

These pretenders from Christ are deadly. They go everywhere in the world, he says.

Everywhere the gospel goes, everywhere the truth goes, they go. Many deceivers have gone out into the world.

The world here simply means into the realm of human life.

They go everywhere in the world where they can corrupt the gospel, everywhere they can pollute the church. I'm telling you, everywhere the gospel has ever gone, they have gone.

Everybody from the Mormons to the Roman Catholic system to the cults and all the...all of the bizarre forms of Christianity down to the current signs and wonders and supposed miracle movements.

They're everywhere.

Everywhere the truth goes, Satan sends them. They preach their other gospel.

John tells this woman there are several dangers to avoid.

A. Danger in losing spiritual progress. (v. 8)

“lose not those things which we have wrought...”

One can lose ground spiritually. The church can lose ground. The believer can lose ground.

That's why we must be careful what we allow into the church under the guise of "Christian teaching."

Paul had a similar concern for the Corinthians

2 Corinthians 11:2-4 ² For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you* as a chaste virgin to Christ. ³ But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴ For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*.

B. Danger in losing your reward. (v. 8)

You can't lose your salvation but you can lose your reward.

If you are not faithful to the truth you will lose your reward.

APPLICATION: Some people can unwittingly give to a "ministry" organization that is not sound biblically thinking they are helping the cause of Christ when in actuality they are hindering the truth and losing their reward.

What a tragedy it is when God's servants labor faithfully to build up a church, and then the work is destroyed by false teaching.

No wonder Paul wrote to the Galatian assemblies, "I am afraid of [for] you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain" (Gal. 4:11).³

QUOTE: Wiersbe wrote: "Church members need to respect the work of faithful pastors and teachers and do everything to protect it and extend it. God's servants must one day give an account of their ministries, and they want to do it "with joy and not with grief" (Heb. 13:17)." ⁴

C. Danger in losing the truth. (v. 9)

Transgresseth – from the Greek word "proago" "to go beyond established bounds of teaching or instruction"

The established bounds are revealed in Scripture.

Any teaching not consistent with Scripture is to be rejected.

By receiving these people you receive the enemies of sound doctrine and enemies of Christ.

In Philippians Paul called false teachers "dogs" enemies of Christ.

³Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 2 Jn 7

⁴Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. 2 Jn 7

Love has to be with discernment!

Love is NOT BLIND!

You should never in anyway support, be hospitable to, embrace, have fellowship with, or associate with, given any sign of affirmation to those who are not teaching the truth about Christ!

YOU CANNOT EMBRACE THOSE WHO ARE AGAINST SCRIPTURE!

If you do truth will be quickly lost!

EXPLANATION: We've seen it in the seminaries of our nation through its history. We've seen it in the Christian colleges.

We've seen it in churches and denominations, how this unbiblical love, this love without truth starts to wrap up liars and deceivers and antichrists and embrace them and then the truth is lost.

And many deceivers have gone out into the world.

D. Danger in losing your family. (v. 10)

Receive into to your house with the idea of showing them hospitality.

You place your home under the influence of false teaching.

Receive – (lambano) is a word that is used of hospitality. Don't show these people hospitality.

ILLUSTRATION: I have witnessed to JW's, Mormons and people from cults, but have not affirmed in or helped them in their cause.

The point is believers are not to welcome them and provide care and help them in their endeavor.

APPLICATION: We must not allow false teaching into our homes.

Today there is radio, TV, Internet and other ways it insidiously invades our home.

What kind of message do you send your children?

You open the door to allow satan to fill their head with lies.

E. Danger in losing your testimony. (v. 11)

Bidding them God's speed – one word in the Greek chairein – means "Rejoice.

It was a common Christian greeting conveying joy.

False teachers should be shunned not welcomed.

Someone might say this is unloving, but John says it is loving in the truth.

Don't encourage them in their error.

They need to know you do not affirm them in any way.

We must be careful not to encourage them in an erroneous and dangerous way.

Again, in that day there were inns, but they were often places of ill-repute, not suitable for the average traveler.

So the church would extend hospitality to these traveling teachers.

According to the norms of hospitality, the host was not only giving the guest food and lodging, but also providing patronage, guaranteeing the rest of the community that the guest was a worthy person (Kruse, pp. 213, 215-216).

If you provided hospitality, you were changing the stranger's status from being under suspicion as an outsider to being a trusted guest.

Thus, John says that we should not even give such teachers a greeting.

To say, "God bless you," or, "Have a good day," or to call a false teacher, "brother," imparts a blessing or word of encouragement that we should not give.

John is talking about those who promote damnable heresies, not to fellow believers who disagree with us over some non-essential doctrines.

There is an inseparable connection between truth and love.

Biblical love seeks the highest good of the one loved.

If a false teacher is actively involved in deceiving people about the truth, so that they go to eternal condemnation, then we are not acting in love to do anything to encourage such scoundrels in their evil deeds.

QUOTE: John Stott observes, “If John’s instruction still seems harsh, it is perhaps because his concern for the glory of the Son and the good of men’s souls is greater than ours, and because ‘the tolerance on which we pride ourselves’ is in reality an ‘indifference to truth’” (*The Epistles of John* [Eerdmans], p. 214; the quote within the quote comes from Neil Alexander, *The Epistles of John, Torch bible commentaries* [S.C.M. Press]).

He adds (pp. 214-215), “False teaching ... is not just an unfortunate error; it is a ‘wicked work’ It may send souls to eternal ruin.”

CONCLUSION:

- I. A Word of Commendation: Walk in Truth. (vv.1-4)
- II. A Word of Challenge: Walk in Love. (vv. 5-6)
- III. A Word of Caution: Walk in Truth and Love (vv. 7-13)

ILLUSTRATION: The impish Roman god Cupid - supposedly shooting love-darts at people - was thought to be blind.

This is perhaps where we get the expression, “Love is Blind!”

Is love blind?

JOHN SAYS NO!

**BE LOVING BUT TRUE BIBLICAL LOVE IS DISCERNING
AND IT DOES NOT DISREGARD THE TRUTH!**