

### Believers Are Exhorted to Love One Another

#### 2 John

2 John - *“The Elder, to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth,<sup>2</sup> because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: <sup>3</sup> Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.*

*<sup>4</sup> I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. <sup>5</sup> And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. <sup>6</sup> This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.*

*<sup>7</sup> For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. <sup>8</sup> Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. <sup>9</sup> Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. <sup>10</sup> If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; <sup>11</sup> for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.*

*<sup>12</sup> Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. <sup>13</sup> The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.”*

#### Background Notes

The apostle John wrote five books of the New Testament – the Gospel of John (written between AD 85 and 90), the three epistles of John (written between AD 90 and 95), and the book of Revelation (written between AD 95 and 100).

In the second epistle of John, the apostle referred to himself as “The Elder” (v1). The term “elder” may refer to the apostle’s age, or to his position, or perhaps to both. John would have been an old man at this time, and he was certainly in a leadership position in the early Church.

The epistle of 2 John is addressed to *“the elect lady and her children.”* Who was this chosen lady, and who were her children? Was *“the elect lady and her children”* figurative language for a local church and its members, or was this a letter to an individual Christian woman? There are various opinions on this matter.

My belief is that 2 John is a personal letter from the apostle John to an unnamed Christian woman and her children. She is “elect” - chosen by God - just as all believers are “elect” “*chosen by God from the foundation of the world*” (Ephesians 1:4). The fact that verse 13 mentions the woman’s sister and her children supports the idea that this is a personal letter, not a letter to a 1<sup>st</sup> century local church.

In verse 12, the apostle John mentioned that he was writing with “paper and ink.” This “paper” would have been papyrus - rough sheets made from the papyrus plant. The ink would have been a mixture of charcoal and water with an added binder.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Believers should walk in truth and love.

The theme of 2 John is “***Walking in Christ’s Commandments.***” Walking or living in truth and love is certainly essential to following Christ’s commandments.

Notice the emphasis on truth and love in verses 1-6. Notice in verse 3 that truth and love were added to the typical Christian greeting of grace, mercy, and peace: “*Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.*”

Both truth and love are very important for proper Christian living. If we have truth without love, we may be correct and orthodox in our beliefs, but we will be cold and lacking in compassion. On the other hand, if we have love without truth, we will be involved in mere sentimentalism or humanistic compassion. ***So both truth and love are essential!***

As believers, we should not only ***know the truth*** (v1) and let the ***truth abide in us*** (v2), but we should ***walk in the truth.*** “*I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father*” (v4).

#### - ***Walking in truth.***

In verses 1-5 we have the command that believers are to ***walk in the truth.*** What does “walk in the truth” mean? It means that you will run your life by the Word of God, both in what you believe and in how you live.

Do you run your life by the Word of God? Do you order your life by the truths found in the Word of God? Here’s an example of an important truth that is found in God’s Word. 1 John 2:17 says that “*the world is passing away.*” Do we really order our lives around this truth? If we do, then why do we spend and invest so much of our time and interest and money in the success and pleasure and possessions of this passing world system? If we examine our lives by that standard - are we really “walking in the truth”? We should examine our lives in the light of the truths in God’s Word.

Notice - walking in truth, or running our lives by the Word of God, is a **command** (v4). It's **not an option** for the Christian. We **are** to walk in truth!

## **- Walking in love.**

In verses 5-6, we have the command that believers are to **walk in love**. The early Christians learned this commandment right from the beginning of their Christian experience – and so did we. But are we really “walking in love”? Verse 6 says that walking in love means to obey the Lord and His commandments. We can't really love the Lord or our fellow believers if we are disobedient Christians. We can't even love our wives, and husbands, and children if we are unwilling to obey the Lord and His Word!

Illustration: Just the other day, our website (growingchristians.org) received an email from a woman who asked if it was okay to divorce her husband. She felt that this would be the most “loving” thing to do, because her marriage was falling apart. I think I know how the apostle John would have answered this email, based on his inspired view of what it means to walk in truth and love. So in my email response, I tried to follow the apostle John's example and write back in truth and love. I exhorted her to walk in truth and love and obey the Lord's commandments.

Believers should walk in truth and love.

## **2. Believers should not show hospitality to false teachers.**

Verses 9-10: *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him.”*

Are these verses saying that it is wrong for believers to invite unbelievers into their homes? No! In fact, Scripture encourages believers to build relationships with unbelievers in order to share the gospel with them.

The context of these verses has to do with the false teachers of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. *“For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist”* (v7). These false teachers denied the full deity of Jesus Christ.

This 1<sup>st</sup> century false teaching led to the heresy of Gnosticism in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. “Jehovah's Witnesses” are sometimes called “modern day Gnostics” because they deny the full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the false teaching that was in view in verses 9-10 – the denial of the full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The early Christians were not to welcome the false teachers - the agents of false doctrine - into their homes. A man named Cerinthus was one of the leading Gnostic false teachers of the day. Early Church literature records state that the apostle John would not enter one of the Roman baths of the 1<sup>st</sup> century when he learned that Cerinthus was inside.

It's also recorded that Polycarp, the well-known disciple of the apostle John, confronted another Gnostic false teacher named Marcion with the words, *"I know thee, thou firstborn of Satan."* So neither the apostle John nor his disciple Polycarp would befriend, nor show hospitality to, nor give recognition to anyone who professed to be a Christian but who did not abide in the doctrine of Christ.

So this stern exhortation in 2 John teaches us how to deal with false teachers who deny the full deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. This Scripture is very appropriate today in reference to the Christian cults who knock on your door and try to push their false teaching about the Person and work of Christ. But this passage is not telling us we shouldn't relate in a friendly way with the average non-Christian neighbor, or non-Christian fellow student, or non-Christian colleague at work!

Notice that showing hospitality to these false teachers is the same as sharing in their evil deeds (v11)! Believers should not show hospitality to false teachers.

## **Practical Application**

### **Let's maintain the truth and receive a full reward**

Verse 8: *"Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward."*

There is some question here in the translation as to whether the pronoun should be "we" or "you." In either case, however, the teaching is clear: there is reward for maintaining and standing for the truth about the Person and Work of Christ. We must maintain the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is 100% God and 100% Man, and we must maintain the truth of His atoning work, His resurrection, His ascension, and His coming glory.

John commended the "elect lady" for maintaining the truth in her family. Verse 4: *"I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father."* This "elect lady" will be rewarded at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

We, too, will be rewarded for maintaining all the truth about our Lord Jesus Christ. You will be rewarded for maintaining this truth in your personal witness. You will be rewarded for maintaining this truth in your family. You will be rewarded for maintaining this truth in your church.

Let's maintain the truth - and receive a full reward!