

TEXT: 2 John – Paul Apple paulgapple@gmail.com www.bibleoutlines.com

TITLE: MARRIAGE OF LOVE AND TRUTH IN THE CHURCH

BIG IDEA:

RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTALISM AND ECUMENISM MASQUERADE AS LOVE BUT MUST BE EXPOSED AS APOSTASY IF THEY DENY GOD’S TRUTH --

WALKING IN CHRISTIAN LOVE REQUIRES OBEYING GOD’S TRUTH

INTRODUCTION:

They say that good things come in small packages. That is certainly the case with this gem of a small epistle in 2 John. It is about the size of a standard letter of the first century – fitting neatly on to one sheet of parchment – about 8” X 10” – not very different from our standard notebook paper today. While it is small by NT standards, the theological significance of these 13 verses is **huge** for our evangelical church landscape today. It deals with the fundamental issue of the relationship between **Love and Truth** in the church. That lies at the heart of the biblical doctrine of **Separation**. How does our Lord want us to deal with false teachers – with those who make it their profession to try to influence others towards a wrong view of the person of Christ or those who pervert the nature of the core gospel message?

The ecumenical movement and the various broad-based church councils and associations advocate a “let’s all get along” type of cooperative approach. Let’s not talk about doctrinal issues or things that might divide. Let’s focus on social issues where we can impact people in practical ways with the love of Jesus Christ. Look at the path towards apostasy that all of the mainline denominations in the United States have followed in the past century. Examine all of the educational centers – whether universities or seminaries – that have their roots in biblical truth. Where do they stand now with respect to their view of God’s revelation in the Word of God; their view of divine miracles; their view of the person of Jesus Christ; their view of the gospel message and its exclusivity??

I think of just Princeton Seminary as one example. I grew up in a United Presbyterian church outside of Philadelphia that was associated with the preaching of giants of the faith like Dr. Donald Barnhouse and Dr. James Boice. Our pastor was a graduate of Princeton Seminary and skilled in biblical exposition and preaching. When I arrived on the campus of Princeton University in 1970 I was shocked to find that the students over at the seminary had to come over to our undergraduate bible studies if they wanted to find any solid teaching at all. Their professors were all apostate liberals who were churning out graduates that would continue to undermine the truth of the Word of God. What a sad state of affairs – and it happened in such a short span of time.

So today we hear much encouragement to have **positive dialogue** with Roman Catholic priests and leaders. We have so much in common we hear. Whatever happened to our historical perspective of the lessons we should have learned from the Reformation? Has the doctrinal system of Roman Catholicism changed to now embrace the true gospel? We are warned against aggressive evangelization of the Jewish community – they find that offensive. They have their roots in the worship of God. Let’s be sensitive here. How about the current political correctness craze to make sure we tiptoe with sensitivity around our Islamic friends. How would our Lord

interact with some of these religious leaders – truly the blind leading the blind into the pits of destruction.

RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTALISM AND ECUMENISM MASQUERADE AS LOVE BUT MUST BE EXPOSED AS APOSTASY IF THEY DENY GOD’S TRUTH --

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(:1-3) GREETING IN THE CONTEXT OF CHRISTIAN LOVE AND TRUTH

A. (:1a) The Respected Author – the Remaining Apostle = John

“The elder”

Ὁ πρεσβύτερος

Can be both a personal reference that connotes maturity and age and respect and wisdom as well as an official church title that points to his authority and ministry; word from which we get Presbyterian (reference to form of govt)

The Apostle John in a unique sense had become known as **“The Elder”** as he was the only one remaining from the Apostles; the one who still had direct connection back to the ministry and commendation of Christ; the one who still could exercise authority over all of the local churches; Probably writing this epistle at the end of his life – around 90-95 AD during his ministry at Ephesus; transition away from apostolic leadership of the churches to local autonomy under plurality of elder rule

Think of all that John had experienced in his life and ministry; think of his tender heart as expressed in 1 John as he addressed believers as beloved children; (three epistles probably closely linked together); think of his concern that they be established in the faith as his departure grows near

Remember in his younger days how the Lord Jesus referred to James and his brother John as the **Sons of Thunder!** **Luke 9:49-56** -- John had to go through a learning curve growth in Christian maturity before he learned how to properly balance truth and love in his own Christian walk.

B. (:1b) The Recipients – Specific Church Audience

“to the chosen lady and her children,”

ἐκλεκτῇ κυρία καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῆς,

Two possibilities:

- Specific Christian woman and her family
- More probably, a specific local church

Noted below that only some of the chosen lady’s children are walking in the truth and that is the subject for commendation – more likely a reference to a church fellowship where it is not surprising to find that some professors of faith are not genuine

Zane Hodges: The conclusion that 2 John is addressed to a church is further supported by the observation that in the Greek the writer drops the singular number for his pronouns after verse 5 and uses a singular again only in verse 13. Indeed, the general nature of the epistle's content is most appropriate to a community.

Precious doctrine of election; John is going to emphasize their responsibility to persevere in truth and faith and love, despite strong deception from false teachers that would threaten to lead them astray and shipwreck their Christian commitment – so he starts with the comfort and security of the privilege of divine election – **Ephes. 1:3-5; 2 Thess. 2:13; John 15:16, 19**

C. (:1c) The Relationship between Love and Truth – Introducing the Theme of the Epistle

“whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth,”

οὗς ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καὶ οὐκ ἐγὼ μόνος ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντες οἱ ἐγνωκότες τὴν ἀλήθειαν,

“*T*” is emphasized in the Greek; agape love; produced by Holy Spirit

Truth as a system of Christian doctrine

Truth as the person of Jesus Christ

Wiersbe: Truth = reality as opposed to mere appearance, the ultimate that is the basis for all that we see around us; false teachers around who were spreading error

Alford: the communion of love is as wide as the communion of faith.

Knowledge of the truth is a prerequisite to genuine Christian love and should result in such **(1 Tim. 1:5)**

John is going to remind us that the truth always produces genuine Christian love; and love always must operate within the boundaries of God's truth

Love without truth is mere sentimentalism and truth without love is hypocrisy and legalism

D. (:2) The Priority of the Truth

“for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:”

διὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν μένουσαν ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ μεθ' ἡμῶν ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

Stott: So long as the truth endures in us and with us, so long shall our reciprocal love also endure. If this is so, and Christian love is founded upon Christian truth, we shall never increase the love which exists between us by diminishing the truth which we hold in common.

Remember that the Holy Spirit is called the **Spirit of Truth** – **1 John 2:27** *“the anointing which you received from Him”*

E. (:3) The Blessed Resources of the Christian Life

“Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the

Son of the Father, in truth and love.”

ἔσται μεθ’ ἡμῶν χάρις ἔλεος εἰρήνη παρὰ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ παρὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ.

Vincent: *Mercy* = God’s kindness and goodwill toward the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them

Connection between God the Father and God the Son

All of God’s resources come to us in association with truth and love

(;4) THANKSGIVING / COMMENDATION FOR OBEDIENCE TO THE TRUTH

“I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father.”

Ἐχάρην λίαν ὅτι εὑρηκα ἐκ τῶν τέκνων σου περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς ἐντολὴν ἐλάβομεν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς.

Passive: *“I was rejoiced”* – What makes you happy?

How did John find out this report?? By letter?? By personal visit and someone reporting back??

Connection between walking in truth and obedience to God’s commandment; we need to order our life by the instruction of the Word of God

TWO PILLARS OF ANY GENUINE CHRISTIAN CHURCH = LOVE AND TRUTH

Concerned not just with what we believe and how we think but with how we act; the Christian walk; very practical orientation

I. (:5-6) BE CAREFUL TO WALK IN CHRISTIAN LOVE

A. (:5) The Reminder to Continue to Walk in Christian Love

“And now I ask you, lady, not as writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.”

καὶ νῦν ἐρωτῶ σε, κυρία, οὐχ ὡς ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφων σοι ἀλλὰ ἣν εἶχομεν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους.

What “beginning” is in view here? **1 John 2:7-8**

Wiersbe: a new commandment in what sense? Not in time, because even Old Testament Jews were instructed to love their neighbors (Lev. 19:18, 34) and the strangers within their gates (Deut. 10:19). But with the coming of God’s Son to earth, this commandment is new in emphasis and in example.

Stott: Both faith and love are commanded. Some complain: “How can you tell me to believe what I do not believe or love whom I do not love? It is only when faith is regarded as an intuition and love as an emotion that they appear to lie beyond the sphere of duty.”

B. (:6) The Definition of Christian Love

“And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.”

καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, ἵνα περιπατῶμεν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ· αὕτη ἡ ἐντολή ἐστίν, καθὼς ἠκούσατε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατήτε.

Not just one commandment – but following all that Christ taught
1 Cor. 13 fleshes out our understanding of this Christian love

II. (:7-9) BE CAREFUL TO WALK IN CHRISTIAN TRUTH

A. (:7) The Deception (Danger)

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.”

Ὅτι πολλοὶ πλάνοι ἐξῆλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, οἱ μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος.

Dealing at this time with a very specific heresy of the Gnostics – refuted in 1 John; but principles would apply to other heresies that would preach another Jesus or another gospel – at a fundamental level

A deceiver is a false teacher who tries to lead others down the path of error

Gone out from the church – at one time they were professors of the true faith within the context of the church; but they fell into apostasy; Jude 3; 1 John 2:19; Acts 20:30

B. (:8) The Warning to Persevere in Christian Truth and Guard Against Apostasy

“Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.”

βλέπετε ἑαυτοῦς, ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέσητε τὴν εἰργασάμεθα ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πλήρη ἀπολάβητε.

What is at danger of being lost here?

C. (:9) The Definition of Apostasy

“Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.”

Πᾶς ὁ προάγων καὶ μὴ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει· ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ, οὗτος καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει.

“teaching of Christ” now broadens out what types of errors you might encounter

Doctrine of “Abiding” is key to understanding the theology of the Apostle John

John 15

1 John 3

John always makes the connection between the Father and the Son

(:10-11) PRACTICAL APPLICATION RELATED TO INTERACTION WITH FALSE TEACHERS

A. (:10) The Command – Separation Seems Harsh but Necessary

“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;”

εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ ταύτην τὴν διδαχὴν οὐ φέρει, μὴ λαμβάνετε αὐτὸν εἰς οἰκίαν καὶ χαίρειν αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε·

Not talking about Christian Hospitality here but about how we should treat false teachers
Background of context of itinerant missionaries and preachers and teachers (cf. 3 John)

Jehovah’s Witnesses just came to my door last Sunday afternoon – walking through our neighborhood

Such treatment may seem harsh to us; what’s the harm in having a warm, engaging relationship like so many evangelical leaders advocate today? Why shouldn’t we share the platform or prayer breakfast context with a wide variety of religious leaders where we could all learn to respect our differences?

MacArthur: Traveling preachers dependent on host families; do not care for these false teachers; don’t host them and give them acceptance; don’t let them appear to be worthy of your care

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[Example of **Crusade Ministry of Billy Graham** – how does his methodology measure up against this standard??]

John Ashbrook: Billy Graham, the Compromising Prophet

The only book addressed to a lady; ladies are given to love; cf. the love reflected in the home; husbands need to work at loving their wives; any good thing can be taken too far – including Christian love; don’t treat these false teachers the same way you would treat believers; one of the key guidance passages in doctrine of separation; charisma of Billy Graham even when at college in Wheaton; on the campus at the same time; has become the most famous religious figure in the world today; the classic example of the problem of separation; importance of boundaries in every sport; reline the lines in baseball every day; Satan has used Billy Graham to seek to rub out the lines that God says should exist between believer and non-believer (2 Cor. 6);

4 Lines that have been rubbed out:

1. The Line has been erased by Unscriptural Sponsorship

General sponsorship of the crusades; get the mayor to invite you; get the papers to cover it; get both the modernists and the fundamentalists to support the crusade – these were always his three conditions; Graham did not care who sponsored him as long as no strings on his message – sounds good – but what does God say? Have no part with them! Cf. kids rubbing out the line in sports;

2. The Line has been erased by Unscriptural Association with Catholicism

What does the Bible teach about salvation – **Titus 3:5**; what is the foundation of Catholicism? Salvation connected to our righteous acts; What was the Reformation all about? “We can meet and talk together as Christian brothers”; we agree that Christ is the way to God; Graham took an honorary degree from Catholic university; Jesuits were formed to try to eliminate Protestants and fight the growing force of the gospel;

3. The Line has been erased by Unscriptural Counseling of Converts

When you lead a new convert to the Lord you need to direct them to sound churches; when you are sponsored by multiple churches you have to treat them equally; come out from among the modernistic churches; come out of the Catholic church; you can’t play favorites; policy of ecumenical crusades not “come out from among them” but “stay among them”;

4. The Line has been erased on Doctrines and Issues

Billy Graham is darling of ecumenical crowd and even unbelievers today; **Luke 6: 22**; when all the world loves you there is something wrong; **vs. 26**; political figures and figures in world govt and presidents all speak well of Billy Graham; means you have been doing something wrong; he does not preach the gospel in a way that is faithful to Scripture; specific doctrines and issues:

- a. scoffs at the blood of Christ; you will not hear anything about the cleansing blood of Christ; some doctrines are the duty of evangelists and some of pastors?? Look at what doctrines are deliberately avoided?
- b. The necessity of salvation for all (**Acts 4:12**); “growing in sensitivity” – Jews have a right to be respected for what they are?? If Jews come forward, don’t try to lead them to Jesus Christ; he doesn’t stress the conversion of Jews?? His message is not good either; What caused Billy to change his approach to Jews?? He began accepting awards and rubbing shoulders with their leaders; his associations tempered his doctrine;
- c. softening of tone of condemnation – preaching has weakened; current terminology focuses on loneliness, alienation, purpose, meaning of life, etc have become the emphasis – leading to personal joy; no word of judgment and hell and condemnation;
- d. accommodation to the world – featuring movie stars and athletes who play on Sunday, beauty queens in their bikinis; etc. Can you have everything the world offers as well as Christ?

You must do God’s work in God’s way; don’t make argument from genuine conversions at Crusades that Graham’s methods are justified; cf. Moses being judged for striking rock twice in anger; end does not justify the means

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B. (:11) The Reason – The Issue Involves Fellowship and Condoning Evil

“for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.”

ὁ λέγων γὰρ αὐτῷ χαίρειν κοινωνεῖ τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ τοῖς πονηροῖς.

Look at the connection between false teaching and “*evil deeds*”; theology is never morally neutral

Back to the teaching of **2 Cor. 6** of not being “*unequally yoked*”

Jude – “*contend earnestly for the faith*”

1 John 4 – don’t be gullible to believe every teaching that comes down the pike; “*test the spirits*”

Titus 1:9 “*refute those who contradict*” sound doctrine – these are strong words

Titus 1:16 “*They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed*” – no value in spending time with these folks

(:12-13) CLOSING WITH A VIEW TOWARDS FURTHER EDIFICATION AND JOY

A. (:12) Desire for Face to Face Visit

“Having many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that your joy may be made full.”

Πολλά ἔχων ὑμῖν γράφειν οὐκ ἐβουλήθην διὰ χάρτου καὶ μέλανος, ἀλλὰ ἐλπίζω γενέσθαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλήσαι, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν πεπληρωμένη ᾖ.

B. (:13) Closing Greeting

“The children of your chosen sister greet you.”

Ἀσπάζεται σε τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἀδελφῆς σου τῆς ἐκλεκτῆς.

Most likely a reference to another congregation of believers

Responsibility to Persevere in the faith (the Preservation of the Saints) is wrapped in the security blanket of the precious doctrine of God’s Sovereign and Gracious Election

CONCLUSION:

MARRIAGE OF LOVE AND TRUTH IN THE CHURCH

What God has joined together, let no man put asunder

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where have you experienced the conflict between truth and unity in Christian ministry?
- 2) Where have you experienced spiritual growth in coming to a more balanced walk of truth and love in your own experience?
- 3) What evangelical leaders today do you see violating these instructions regarding how to relate to false teachers?
- 4) How can we balance the responsibility for biblical separation with a tone of Joy in our ministry?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Mook: Care for the Truth

To appreciate the Apostle John's emphasis on the truth; recall the night before the Lord Jesus was crucified; He spoke to the disciples in what seemed to them cryptic terms about what would transpire shortly; they still did not understand the scope of His mission in the world; cf. John 14:6; Lord declared that He is the Truth; "everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice" – spoken before Pontius Pilate who responded "What is truth?" Not mere philosophical speculation; Lord in Himself is the full embodiment of the truth; every believer has responsibility to safeguard the truth; much more than an abstract concept; intense spiritual war – key issue revolves around the person of Christ; the devil hates the truth; shortest book in the NT in number of verses; we must not be complacent or passive in the face of attacks against the truth; don't make compromising arrangements; those who do not hold to the truth are to be treated as such; their ideas are not equivalent to the truth and have nothing to commend them; value what has been revealed concerning Christ; you are either with Christ or an adherent of antichrist;

Phil Johnson: John on Christian Fellowship

Do an overview of life and character of Apostle John; balanced individual; love and truth kept in equilibrium; only Apostle that lived to old age; very influential figure in early church; outlived Paul and Peter by many years; Irenaeus knew personally people who had sat under ministry of John; bridge to the church fathers and to the apologists of the second century; rare for Christian ministries to stay true for over a century; wrote a good portion of the NT; 3 epistles written late in his life as a patriarch; well into his 90's when he died; finished well; matured well; his areas of weakness developed into strengths; an amazing example of growing in Christ; makes himself anonymous; keeps himself out of the center of attention; refers to himself as disciple whom Jesus loved; Apostle of Love; outgrew some of the unloving tendencies of his younger life; vs nickname Jesus gave him = "Sons of thunder;" started out with zeal for truth but little compassion for people; very ambitious; intolerance; sins of imbalance in his youth; our worst faults often are connected to our strengths which are pushed out of balance to the extreme; dangerous to push any truth to the extreme and become unbalanced; behave as an extremist; selfishly committed to your own selfish orientation to truth;

3 Areas where John learned importance of Balance

1) He learned the balance of Love and Truth (2 John)

He was always committed to truth; John 1 – early follower of Jesus; not merely following personality cult of John the Baptist; **Luke 9:49** Jesus teaching about childlike humility; receiving other believers in the name of Jesus; childlike quality to our faith; classic example of bigoted sectarianism; bad time to raise this issue; **vs. 54** – sense of eagerness in this suggestion; situation different here – unbelievers who openly oppose Christ and are rude to Him; would be cool to call down fire from heaven to sweep away enemies of the truth; but those are fleshly thoughts; Elijah was a prophet under the law system to bring condemnation; but gospel message comes from Christ = message of salvation; God in the future will execute fiery wrath; but our message today is to preach the gospel = completely different objective; seeking their salvation, not their destruction; love your enemies; God shows lovingkindness to the ungodly and commands us to do the same; truth without love has no power – just brutality; love without truth has no character = hypocrisy; need to have balance\

Look at **2 John** – repeatedly couples the concepts of love and truth; the supreme lesson of all truth; the sum and substance of God's commands = loving one another; balances that by urging woman not to compromise the truth; doctrine of Christ = apostolic understanding of the gospel;

don't give him a place to stay and not even a ceremonial greeting that shows him honor; not saying be rude to him; don't embrace him as a brother or show him any public honor; don't encourage him; you don't want to become a partaker of his evil deeds; not calling down fire from heaven but not going to the opposite extreme; watch out for people who make their living twisting and perverting the truth; bless those who oppose us; but that must stop short of assisting those who are false teachers

2) He learned to balance ambition and humility

3) He learned to balance glory and suffering

Dr. James Boyer: John is author of 5 NT books; word speaking of age became associated with office in church; position of respect and authority because of age and experience; 1 Pet. 3:1 Peter calls himself an elder as well; only place in Scripture where this word occurs in singular with the article; "The old man" writes to you ...; this short letter just about the size of one sheet of papyrus; word lady feminine form of word lord; not a proper name or elect lady and elect sister not likely to be in same family; not talking about romantic emotion of love and marriage; key word is "truth" in this epistle; sense of truth opposite to a lie = the reality; the body of truth = the gospel; the faith

Gil Rugh: Series on 2 John

Second smallest book in NT; standard size letter of NT times; longer letters like 1 Cor are exceptional; 8 X 10 is standard sheet of papyrus – some things have stayed pretty much the same; summary of material that is in 1 John; maybe he wrote this first and elaborated on it in 1 John; difficulty developing in the churches; written from 90-95 AD; 60 years after Christ; all the other apostles have passed from the scene; some teachers have broken away and are no longer submitting to the truth of God as administered by apostolic doctrine; they are trying to lure others to follow them; 2 key words: truth and love; John sees no separation between truth and love; God's truth always produces God's love in lives; love can only function in the context of God's truth;

(:1-3) Introduction: Author and Recipients; identifies himself in a more personal way that connects himself to his audience; *elder* refers to an older person (Titus 2:2); also for the governing leaders in Israel – usually older, mature men (Ex. 3 – Moses to speak to the elders of the people; Num. 11:16; Luke 20:1); also leaders in the local church (Acts 14:23); transitioning away from apostolic leadership of the churches; 1 Pet. 5:1 – Peter identifies with the elders; content of the letter is the same whether addressed to a specific woman or a local church and its members; "elect" – profound truth brought out in almost incidental fashion; Bible talks about those who have been chosen; **Ephes. 1:3-5**; reference to names written in the Book of Life in Rev. 13 and 17 before the foundation of the world; **2 Thess. 2:13** – sovereignty resides with God – including our salvation; Paul does not shy away from talking about this subject to new believers; ordained both the ends and the means; work of the Spirit in setting us apart and bringing us to faith in Jesus Christ; **John 15:16**; self sacrificing love; undefeatable; always seeks their highest good; **1 Cor. 13** describes this love in some detail; unique in its enduring quality; "*Sanctify them in Truth; your Word is Truth.*" The truth that we share in common; that has gripped our hearts and transformed us and made us new; I love you in the realm of the truth and it is God's truth that has produced this love; Holy Spirit is Spirit of Truth – has taken up residence in us