

OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF 2 JOHN – MARRIAGE OF LOVE AND TRUTH IN THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION:

They say that good things come in small packages. That is certainly the case with this gem of a small epistle of only 13 verses in 2 John. It is about the size of a standard letter of the first century – fitting neatly on one sheet of parchment – about 8” X 10” – not very different from our standard notebook paper today. While it is small by NT standards, its theological significance 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 ambition 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 can speak with experience as to where the institutions of Princeton University and Princeton Theological Seminary stand today with respect to the truth of the gospel message. They are examples of the scourge of apostasy. Princeton University began in 1746 as the **College of New Jersey**, founded by evangelical Presbyterian ministers in the aftermath of the First Great Awakening. Its original mission was to educate ministers of the gospel while providing a broad education for other learned professions. Think of the influence of such prominent theologians as **John Witherspoon**. But now it is a bastion for liberalism.

At the end of our street in Catonsville stands a beautiful United Presbyterian church on the corner of Beechwood Ave and Frederick Ave -- a magnificent structure, but a **monument to apostasy**. Its current pastor is a well-known homosexual who advocates for many of the cultural perversions of our time. This church was probably built with the money and faithfulness of believers of a previous generation. But while it screams for love and tolerance and inclusion, it has lost any connection to biblical truth and no longer bears a testimony for Jesus Christ.

So today we face much pressure to have **positive dialogue** with Roman Catholic priests and leaders of other faiths. 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 – because they find that offensive. Don’t 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 – calling them out as the blind leading the blind into pits of destruction.

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

OVERVIEW:

The aged Apostle John describes for his readers the crucial connection between love, truth and obedience as we guard against apostate false teachers that try to deceive and infiltrate the church. Walking in Christian love requires obeying God’s truth. Exhortations to keep separate from the false teachers and not even extend them any hospitality may seem harsh but are necessary to preserve the integrity of the church fellowship because it is truth that binds the church together in unity. Christians must walk in truth and love while guarding the church against false teaching.

Some churches seem more love oriented; others more truth oriented.

But it is important not to see these 2 characteristics as opposed to one another, but instead as complementary and working together in symmetry.

Read the Epistle – look for the emphasis on **truth** and **love** and **obedience** and **discernment**.

As we begin with the Greeting in **vs. 1**, we will deal with the important background issues of the **Authorship**, **Recipients** and **Occasion** for this letter.

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

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

“The elder”

Ὁ πρεσβύτερος

There is not much dispute that the author was the famous elderly Apostle John. [Although some have suggested that this was a different individual.] But the language and style matches what we see in His Gospel and his other epistles. Church tradition also certainly accepted this letter as being from John. [External evidence: Ireneus and Clement.]

Why does he refer to himself in this anonymous way as *“the elder”*? This 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; It is the word from which we get *Presbyterian* in English (reference to a form of church govt).

Certainly, 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; this was a time of **transition** away from the apostolic leadership of the churches to strict local autonomy under plurality of elder rule. So John is not emphasizing his distinctive apostolic role. He is more aligning himself with the elders of the local assemblies – but still he was *The Elder* in a distinctive sense.

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 and 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,”

More debate here – Two possibilities that both have a lot of support:

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

Robert Yarbrough: The word translated “*lady*” is the Greek word *kyria*. Some have thought that John refers to a female person by the name Kyria or to an anonymous “*select lady*.” But this Greek word was also used for a sociopolitical subdivision in Athens, a subdivision of the larger *ekklesia* (often translated in the New Testament as “*church*”). John appears to be using a word for a **local congregation** that is not attested elsewhere in early Christian writings. This word is chosen because of distinctive local social and linguistic conventions about which we have no additional information. “*Chosen lady*,” then, simply means a local congregation who, as God’s people, are by definition “*elect*” or “*chosen*” (a common term for Christians; see, e.g., **Rom. 16:13; 1 Peter 1:1; 2:9**).

In looking at the overall content of the letter, it seems preferable to me to see the reference to a local church community – where you would have some faithful believers in obedience to the truth and some professors of faith who are not genuine believers. So **vs. 13** -- “*The children of your chosen sister greet you*” – would be a reference to a sister church. You have to remember the close connection that existed with the local assembly usually meeting in a **house** rather than in some type of large assembly hall.

To understand the Occasion for the letter, you must appreciate the importance of **Hospitality** shown towards itinerant Christian teachers and missionaries. The inns of the day were often associated with immoral activity and not appropriate for Christian lodging. These teachers were looking for opportunities to minister in the local context as well as for financial support and commendation as they moved on to spread the gospel in surrounding areas. It would be customary for the local church to welcome them and provide short-term lodging.

We also need to be reminded about the **error of Gnosticism** which these false teachers were promoting. They believed that matter was essentially evil so they denied the physicality of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In their view, He did not literally take on humanity. So they had a false view of the person of Jesus Christ. They were all about hidden forms of knowledge that would raise one to some type of elite status.

John is writing to warn the saints against allowing the infiltration of these false teachers and the promoting of their false doctrines. His plea for separation, rather than showing hospitality or even providing a civil greeting and reception might seem harsh, but was necessary to preserve the purity and unity of the church.

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.

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,”*

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.

J.E. McDermond: Before the official greeting in **verse 3**, the elder makes a statement about love and truth. He professes his love for the readers, and it is a genuine and deep love. Literally, he writes, *whom I love in truth* (*egō agapō en alētheia*). Because there is no definite article here, we should translate this initial use of truth as “*I truly love*” or “*I genuinely love*.” The next two uses of truth do use definite articles, and they (**vv. 1b and 2a**) are probably referring to **theological truth** that the Johannine faithful have in common. The author assures his readers that this truth not only binds them together and serves as the foundation for their love, but it also will be with us forever (**v. 2**). Because the Johannine believers are facing **deception**, the elder begins with this affirmation of love and reassurance that they are found in the truth. This is similar to the pastoral affirmation we have seen in **1 John**.

Our salvation isn't ultimately dependent upon how strongly we feel about God.

It rests upon **the objective truth of what God has done in Jesus Christ**.

Application

Our culture frequently says:

“It doesn't matter **what** you believe as long as you **sincerely** believe it.”

John would disagree.

- **Sincerity cannot transform error into truth.**
- A person can sincerely believe the wrong thing.
- A person can sincerely believe a poisonous substance is medicine.
- Sincerity is important—but **truth is essential**.

D. (:2) The Priority of the Truth

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

Remember that the Holy Spirit is called the **Spirit of Truth** – **1 John 2:27** *“the anointing which you received from Him”* – He has taken up residence in us

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 this truth and it is God’s truth that has produced this love and common bond

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.”

Here again you have the repetition of the theme concepts of the balance between 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.”

How did John find out this report?? By letter?? By someone personally visiting and reporting back??

Note the 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

Biblical truth is designed to transform our walk.

Application: Is there some truth that you have been taught and you understand but you are not practicing?

Perhaps:

- I know I should forgive—but I'm holding a grudge.
- I know I should pray—but I'm neglecting prayer.
- I know I should witness—but I'm remaining silent.
- I know I should control my tongue—but I'm continuing to gossip.
- I know I should pursue holiness—but I'm tolerating sin.

The goal isn't merely to accumulate biblical information.

The goal is to walk in the truth as the lifestyle of the believer.

TWO PILLARS OF ANY GENUINE CHRISTIAN CHURCH = LOVE AND TRUTH

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

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

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.”

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

Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.⁸ On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

Warren 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.

John 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.

Commanded by God

- **Not a recent innovation**
- **Did not originate with me**

“By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” --
John 13:35 – This passage is all about the **Christian Brand = Christlike love**

From my business background, I know a lot about branding. I have spent my entire career in business as a Marketing Manager for 2 local construction and truck and equipment dealerships that represent major manufacturers. Part of that role involves managing **brand integrity**. For 28 years I worked with the Caterpillar brand for AlbanCat (before it was bought out and became CarterCat). Then I switched over to Johnson & Towers for the final 10 years of my career and was involved with the brands of Allison transmissions, Detroit Diesel engines, MTU generators and marine engines, Freightliner and Isuzu trucks – all major brands.

Just to give one example. Caterpillar’s branding police are very particular about how their brand is portrayed. If you get the color scheme wrong when you print an ad or if the spacing and dimensions don’t meet code, they let you know about it. Alban Tractor, the old company name, used to have a fleet of green service trucks. But Cat corporate mandated that they change to white trucks with the decaling on the side to highlight just one word: **SERVICE**. When you think of Cat equipment you should think of strength and reliability – they have the parts and service infrastructure to keep your machines working. Cat wants to own that brand of SERVICE just like Volvo wants to own SAFETY and Dunkin (rebranded from just the more limited Dunkin

Donuts) with its fuel related slogan “*America runs on Dunkin*” wants to own COFFEE and Amazon wants to own everything.

Branding is important. Brands that have stumbled in the past – like Volkswagen and Wells Fargo – have to spend a lot of advertising capital to try to rebuild their reputation. You have seen their commercials about their **restarts**. But once you compromise your brand it is hard to reestablish it. Look at the ads today for Burger King – our chicken nuggets used to be nasty. We have listened to you the consumers and are now introducing a new recipe. Our passage today is all about **branding**. As disciples of Christ, we should own the brand of the marriage between Love and Truth.

Now remember again, this is a **Command** – Not optional
It is something at the core of being a Christian – not some behavior tacked on externally;
This gets to the heart, the essence of our identity – repeated by the Apostle in **John 15:12, 17**

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”

“This is my command: Love each other.”

The Christian Brand is not some **temporary tattoo** that you can wash off; this is a permanent brand that must stick with us – wherever we go – we must be the same person everywhere – this is a command that must be manifested continually.

The World is Watching – *By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.* In the early Church, **Tertullian** tells us that pagans were struck by the witness of Christian love. “*See how they love one another!*” they would remark. I wonder how many people look at us and say the same. Do they visit Grace Bible Baptist and marvel at how we treat one another and respond to one another and love them as visitors?

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.”

Not just one commandment – but following all that Christ taught and modeled

So How did Christ love people? If we are going to love one another as Christ loved His disciples when He was on earth we must understand this --

4 Specific Ways

- First, **Sacrificially** – at great cost – Our life is not our own; we have been bought with a price; Anyone who tries to hang on to his own rights and selfish ways will lose the privilege of serving others in love

My Christian brothers and sisters, what are you sacrificing in order to meet the needs of your fellow church members? We are not called to just like one another, but to sacrificially love one another.

- Secondly. Christ loved **Unconditionally** – not because of something attractive in others or in order to get something in return from them – we need to be accepting of others – understanding that we are all growing in our spiritual maturity and are at different levels –

Maybe you came here this morning thinking that God could never love you because of something in your past – some shame or guilt or fear that has you in bondage. The Apostle Paul was persecuting believers. He understood what it meant to be **undeserving of God's grace**. That's what makes it Grace instead of merit. We are saved by grace thru faith not of works or any merit on our part.

- Thirdly, **Without partiality** – not that He did not have circles of intimacy – with Peter, James and John at the center of the inner circle – but He showed no prejudice; did not play favorites – there better not be any cliques in our church

Rich, poor, black, white, man, woman, educated, uneducated – it doesn't matter

Look at who Christ seemed to spend the most time with – those who were marginalized by society – the lepers, the handicapped, the sinners, the prostitutes, the tax collectors – not exactly the elite of society

Remember how **James taught us** that we had better not treat those in the church with partiality – don't make distinctions among yourselves and thereby become judges with evil motives –

- Fourthly, [and this is the way that exposes all of the false types of love attempted by cults and false religions] **in a way that glorifies God** –

John 13:31-32 [the context is Jesus washing the feet of the disciples and speaking of His departure -- teaching them about the necessity of love]

“When therefore he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; ³² if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.”

Remember the message that Pastor Harmon taught a couple of weeks ago about how we can **glorify God**.

We aren't trying to earn brownie points with God by loving one another;
We want to see God lifted up and worshiped for Who He is and What He has done for us.

Cults target people who are vulnerable and try to offer them some type of family relationship that will suck them into their group – but their motivation is certainly not to **glorify God**.

1 Cor. 13 fleshes out our understanding of this Christian love – study this passage for more details about how to love others

False ideas about love:

The world says love is about how someone makes them feel or how they feel about someone else, but God says love is about how you **behave** and treat others.

The world's idea of love is completely **self-centered**. We find love when someone makes us feel special or meets our needs.

Christ's demonstration of love is all about **serving others** and meeting their needs.

Spiraling nature here –

As I better understand God's Word, I am more committed to practical love;

As I love others more, I have more interest in going back and diving deeper into what God teaches;

The two feed on each other.

The image of Christ should be formed in each disciple.

Not simple emotion or affection; and not simple cold obedience

BE CAREFUL TO WALK IN 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.”

Remember, John said in **1 John**, *don't believe every spirit. Test the spirits whether they are of God.* In **1 Corinthians 14**, *let the prophet speak with two or three and let the other judge what they say.* Deception is all around us – threatening the purity and health of the church. We must exercise discernment as we listen to those teaching us the Word of God.

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

Anyone who *runs ahead* = picking up the language probably used by the Gnostic false teachers = we are progressives, teaching advanced stuff – the real stuff = God could never become flesh – but this was not an advance in doctrine; this running ahead is a **departing from**

Not all change is good – How can you tell? Use the Bible as your guide

Why the Incarnation matters:

This is an important truth – essential for Christianity – not some minor theological detail:

We must understand Jesus being fully God and being fully man

If Jesus wasn't genuinely **human**:

- His suffering wasn't real
- He didn't genuinely die.
- He didn't genuinely rise bodily.
- He couldn't genuinely represent humanity.

The truth of the gospel collapses.

The **Incarnation** is how Jesus has made a way to the Father thru His own body

John therefore calls these people **deceivers** and **antichrists** (v. 7) – strong language
Why? Because **the identity of Jesus is at the heart of the gospel**.
You cannot change Christology without eventually changing Christianity itself.

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

Robert Yarbrough: Some scholars think that the warning against docetic doctrine in **1 John 4:2** is different from the warning in **2 John 7**. In the **1 John** passage the word translated “*has come*” is in the **perfect tense**. But in **2 John 7** the word translated “*coming*” is in the **present tense**. Accordingly, in **2 John** the warning is perhaps against those who deny the “*coming*” appearance of Christ on earth [the second time], that is, his literal physical return in judgment and glory to inaugurate an earthly messianic era.

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**.”*

What is at danger of being lost here?

Robert Picirelli: There are two possible interpretations of the warning about the possibility of losing that which has been wrought. One possibility is that John is warning these believers that if they succumb to the false teachings they will lose their heavenly reward. The other possibility is that if they fall into this trap they may **lose their very salvation**. The context of the passage argues for the second interpretation; the incarnation is the doctrine that is at stake here, and it is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith. If these Christians are carried away to such an extent that they abandon this basic belief, how can they maintain a proper relationship with God?

Plummer (Second Epistle 3) explains that what this lady and her children are in danger of losing “*is nothing less than God himself*.” (See **Akin** 231; Kruse 212; **Lenski** 568, 569; and **Marshall** 72, 73.) If these Christians lose their relationship with God, they will also lose their hope of eternal life.

This whole context is talking about the subject of Apostasy – not Christian rewards.

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.”

“*teaching of Christ*” now broadens out to include whatever types of errors you might encounter. Doctrine of “Abiding” is key to understanding the theology of the Apostle John – talked about this in studying 1 John

- **John 15**
- **1 John 3**

John always makes the connection between the Father and the Son

The Danger of Another Jesus:

Throughout history people have invented alternative versions of Jesus:

- Jesus as merely a moral teacher
- Jesus as merely a prophet
- Jesus as a political or social revolutionary
- Jesus as a mystical guru
- Jesus as merely an example of human potential

But Christianity isn't built upon whatever version of Jesus we find attractive.

It is built upon **the Jesus revealed in Scripture.**

Paul warned the Corinthians about those proclaiming: “*another Jesus*” -- **2 Corinthians 11:4**

Practical Application

Whenever someone says: “I believe in Jesus,”

the next question should be: “**Which Jesus?**”

What do they believe about:

- His deity?
- His humanity?
- His virgin birth?
- His sinlessness?
- His substitutionary death?
- His bodily resurrection?
- His ascension?
- His return?

Correct doctrine about Christ matters because eternal life depends upon the true Christ.

The word *antichrist* can mean one who opposes Christ, but it also carries the idea of a substitute—something presented in place of the real Christ. A **false Jesus** cannot save. A Jesus who is merely a teacher, moral example, spiritual guide or temporary apparition is not the Jesus proclaimed by the apostles.

Don't go beyond Christ.

Christian maturity isn't discovering something that supersedes apostolic Christianity.

It is becoming increasingly rooted in it.

J.E. McDermond: Verse 9 provides the explanation for how one loses one's reward: *Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ ... does not have God. Conversely, whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.* A parallel is found in **1 John 2:22-25**. There John argues that whoever denies Jesus' role as the Christ also denies the Father. In particular, they are denying the revelation that God gave through Jesus Christ. Without this revelation, which is the source of eternal life, no one can understand or relate to God. In fact, any conduct or doctrine that goes beyond the teaching of Christ leads people astray from the truth and does not encourage their walking in the truth (**2 John 4, 6**).

(: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;”*

Not talking about general Christian Hospitality here [derivation of the word implies love for strangers] but about how we should treat false teachers. Certainly this would apply to door knockers like the Jehovah Witnesses who want to find new converts to their cult. Remember the background of the context of itinerant missionaries and preachers and teachers (cf. **3 John**)

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?

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

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

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.”

Somewhat of an abrupt ending

Love is best communicated and demonstrated in person

B. (:13) Closing Greeting

"The children of your chosen sister greet you."

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

Jerry Harmon: This whole letter is about the relationship between truth and love. Love does not deny truth. Love does not ignore truth. They are to be held together. Someone said, truth without love is **cruelty**. Love without truth is **compromise**. But truth and love held together, that is real **conviction**.

Second John gives us a picture of what a healthy congregation looks like.

A healthy church is:

Truthful

It believes the biblical gospel.

Loving

It genuinely cares for people.

Obedient

It walks according to Christ's commands.

Discerning

It recognizes false teaching.

Faithful

It refuses to compromise Christ.

That combination is essential.

Closing Illustration: Imagine a three-legged stool

The three legs are:

Truth

Love

Discernment

Remove truth and the church becomes sentimental.

Remove love and the church becomes harsh.

Remove discernment and the church becomes vulnerable to deception.

But when all three are present, the church becomes stable.

Truth gives us our foundation.

Love gives us our character.

Discernment gives us our protection.

And all three ultimately point us to Christ.

Closing challenge

This week, consider these questions:

- Where am I tempted to compromise truth in order to gain approval?
- Where am I tempted to use “truth” as an excuse for lovelessness?
- Do I truly confess and trust the biblical Jesus?
- What teaching, influence, or habit needs to be tested against Scripture?
- How can I show Christlike love through concrete obedience this week?

May believers be known neither for harshness without love nor tolerance without truth, but for steadfast devotion to Jesus Christ—the One who is Himself the truth and whose love was displayed at the cross.

WHY STUDY THIS BOOK?

- To gain discernment regarding the dangers of false teachers and how we should relate to them
- To define what apostasy and deception may look like as such false teachers try to infiltrate the church
- To appreciate the essential connection of love, truth and obedience in the life of the church
- To increase our joy as we witness those we love walking in the truth
- To raise awareness of the necessary boundaries of separation in specific contexts
- To knit our hearts together in Christian love as we desire face to face fellowship with Christian leaders that have impacted our lives in the past