

Walk in truth, don't run in error

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Preacher: Euan Dodds

[0 : 00] Gracious Father, we thank you for the fellowship we can enjoy at this time. We thank you that our fellowship is with you and with your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord, we thank you that you are light, that in you there is no darkness at all. And as we come into your presence, Lord, we are conscious of our own sinfulness.

But we know that if we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We thank you for our Lord Jesus Christ, that he is our advocate and the propitiation for our sins and also for the sins of the whole world. Father, as we read his word, we ask that you will help us to keep it.

That we might abide in him and by your grace we might walk in the same way in which he walked. We thank you for the message he gave us from the beginning, Lord, that we should love one another.

[1 : 07] And we pray that we might not love in word or talk, but in deed and in truth. So we pray, Lord, for those we know who are in need or in debt.

They will know that you are the God who provides richly all things we need. Pray for those who are under stress or pressure, at work or at home. That they will learn to cast all our anxieties upon you and trust in you because you care for us.

Pray for those who are grieving, Lord, that you, the God of all comfort, will comfort them and strengthen them. We pray for those who are sick.

That they will know the presence of you, the God who raises the dead and your healing presence with them. Father, we do ask that you will be with us, you will speak to us now in the silence and as we consider your word together.

So we bring ourselves to you in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, if you have a Bible, you would be very welcome to open it at page 1025.

[2 : 24] Over the next two Wednesdays, I hope to study with you two very short letters. At the end of the New Testament, 2 John and 3 John.

So this week we will consider 2 John, page 1025. And next week we'll go on to 3 John. I think I'll read the entire letter.

The elder. To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth. Not only I, but also all who know the truth.

Because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever. Grace, mercy and peace will be with us.

From God the Father. And from Jesus Christ the Father's Son. In truth and love. I rejoice greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth.

[3 : 22] Just as we were commanded by the Father. And now I ask you, dear lady. Not as though I were writing a new commandment. But the one we had from the beginning.

That we love one another. And this is love. That we walk according to his commandments. This is the commandment.

Just as you have heard from the beginning. So that you should walk in it. For many deceivers have gone out into the world. Those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh.

Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves. So that you may not lose what we have worked for. But may win a full reward.

Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ. Does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching. Has both the Father and the Son.

[4 : 22] If anyone comes to you. And does not bring this teaching. Do not receive him into your house. Or give him any greeting. For whoever greets him.

Takes part in his wicked works. Though I have much to write to you. I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you. And talk face to face.

So that our joy may be complete. The children of your elect sister. Greet you. We thank God for his word. Well this week was a big week.

For the world of the restaurant world. The world's number one restaurant. El Bulli. In northern Spain. Closed. After I think 27 years.

I don't know if anyone's been to El Bulli. It's a popular place. Three Michelin stars. One million people a year. Try and eat there. It costs 220 pounds.

[5 : 19] For a 40 course lunch. Just a small. Small tasting courses. And they have some very interesting. Recipes. They have Parmesan marshmallows.

Lamb's brain. With sea urchins. Baby snails. Turtle dove. With tuna. Things like this. It's kind of experimental food. And they've closed.

But they're going to open. The restaurant. As a kind of research center. Where they can come up with new recipes. For people to enjoy. People love new things.

New recipes. New clothes. Men. Myself included. Often love new technology. Pop down the Apple store. That kind of thing. But unfortunately.

There is always. The emergence of new theology. And in John's day. There were preachers.

Traveling around. Introducing all sorts of new ideas. Into the churches.

[6 : 15] New ideas. New ideas. New ideas about sin. New ideas about Jesus Christ. Who he is. New ideas about the cross. And in writing.

First. Second. And third. John. John is really at pains to say. This new theology. Is in fact. No theology. It is anti-gospel. It was a lesson.

That needed to be heard. In the first century. And it's a lesson. We need in the 21st century.

Because there are always. New ideas emerging. Which undermine. The old ideas.

The true gospel. Of the apostles. So we'll consider. To John today. Under that heading. Walk in truth. Don't run into error. And immediately.

As John begins his letter. He makes clear his priorities. Look at verse one. I love. In truth. And not only I. But also all. Who know the truth.

[7 : 11] John loves this lady. And her family. In truth. Verse three. Grace, mercy and peace. Will be with us. From God the Father. And from Jesus Christ. In truth.

And love. Or verse four. I rejoice to find some of your children. Walking in the truth. And verse five. We are to love one another. So John is very clear.

That truth. The truth of the gospel. Always goes hand in hand. With Christian love. Or is meant to. Go hand in hand. Sadly.

It doesn't always. We had a lady. A few weeks ago. And I showed her around. I showed her the building. And I used. The question. That I found. Very effective. In evangelism. Which is.

Are you a Christian? It's a wonderful question. To ask. No one's ever taken offense. At me asking that. And I said. Are you a Christian? She said. Well I go to a Unitarian church. And the Unitarians.

[8 : 08] I think it was in America. They originated. They believe in God. But they don't believe. That Jesus Christ is divine. They don't believe. The Holy Spirit. Is divine. They just sort of believe. In one God.

And I said. Oh. How did you happen. To end up in a Unitarian church? And she said. Well. I went to a. Mainstream church. An Orthodox church. A church teaching the truth. But I didn't get.

A very warm welcome. And so. I went to the Unitarian church. And they were very nice to me. And that's why she stayed. The church that had the truth. Sadly.

It didn't marry that to. Genuine Christian love. And as a consequence. This woman was taken in. By that heretical group. But John says. No. The true preaching of the gospel.

Ought to be accompanied by. Genuine Christian love. These two things always hang together. And he says. Therefore.

[9 : 04] In verses four to six. He explains what that looks like. In verse four. He rejoices. That people are walking in truth. But that's not enough.

He says. And in verse five. He reminds them. Of the commandment. They received. From the beginning. His teaching is not new. It is the original. Apostolic gospel.

And he reminds them. Of the commandment. That they are to love. One another. And verse six. He says. This is love. That we walk. According to his commandments.

This is the commandment. Just as you heard. From the beginning. So that you should walk. In it. So the Christian life. According to John. Is a walk. We walk in the truth. Of the gospel. As a result of that.

We walk in obedience. To the commands. Of Jesus Christ. And that command. Is to love one another. And so we walk. In love. Walking in truth.

[10:02] Walking in obedience. Walking in love. These three things hang together. And it is in fact. Exactly what Jesus himself taught. You remember the upper room. In John 15.

As he prepares. To leave the disciples. Go to the cross. He gathers them around him. And says. As the father has loved me. So have I loved you. Abide in my love.

If you keep my commandments. You will abide in my love. Just as I have kept. My father's commandments. And abide in his love. This is my commandment.

That you love one another. As I have loved you. You are my friends. If you do. What I command you. Truth. Leads to obedience. Leads to love.

Paul says the same. In writing to Timothy. He commands him. To teach the truth. And to rebuke those. Teaching falsehood. First Timothy three. I urge you.

[10:57] When I was going to Macedonia. Remain at Ephesus. So that you may charge certain persons. Not to teach any different doctrine. Why? Verse five.

The aim of our charge. Is love. That issues from a pure heart. And a good conscience. And a sincere faith. The teaching of the truth.

Ought to lead. To genuine. Christian love. Verse one. Makes that point. Very clear. I love this lady. In the truth. Verse two. Because of the truth.

There is a causal relationship. When people hear the truth of the gospel. They become Christians. And through that truth. Therefore love. Other people. So John sets his priorities out.

Very clearly. The truth of the gospel. People. Leading to Christian love. And that maybe sounds a little bit unusual. To our ears. Because love is such a familiar word to us.

[11:54] Isn't it? Music. And films. And conversation. And hello magazine. But Christian love doesn't simply mean. A sort of emotional sentimentality.

It doesn't mean simply affirming someone unconditionally. Whatever they believe. Or however they behave. Christian love is grounded in the truth of the gospel.

Because it is in the gospel we understand what love is. And in his first letter John tells us. 1 John chapter 4. This is love. Not that we loved God.

But that he loved us. And sent his son. To be the propitiation for our sins. What does real love look like? It looks like God showing grace and mercy.

To people who want nothing to do with him. And then John goes on in 1 John. To tell us what that looks like in practice. Beloved. If God so loved us.

[12:55] We also ought to love one another. By this we know love. That Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives.

For the brothers. Real Christian love is grounded in the revelation of scripture. And characterized by obedience to it. We see it in how God deals with us.

And we ought to mirror that in our own lives. Laying down our lives for the brothers. So John says. Don't rush after novelty. Remain with what you heard from the beginning.

Not a new command. But the old one. You must sink your anchor theologically. So that's very important to remember.

That the basis of love is truth. It's very possible to be a sort of busy church. Doing lots of good works. Lots of acts of service. And really putting the emphasis there.

[13:53] Our good works are of course exceedingly important. In the New Testament. But our works need to flow from our love. Which is based upon truth. You see people don't learn to love by being told simply to love.

We learn to love. By understanding. And responding to the gospel. So a church which puts all its emphasis in good works. And charitable works. Well it'll do some wonderful things for a while.

But the generation which follows. Won't understand why they did that in the first place. They won't understand the truth of the gospel. That leads to genuine Christian love. So the basis of love is truth.

One writer put this very eloquently. A man by the name of Joseph Parker. And I think people were criticizing churches. That kept going on about doctrine.

And he said this. These may be old fashioned doctrines. But they created missionary societies. Hospitals. Orphanages. They gave every child a new value.

[14:59] Every father a new responsibility. Every mother a new hope. And constituted human society into a new conscience and a new trust. Let us be careful how we give up trees that have borne such fruit.

And in whose leaves there has been such healing. Truth. United to love. The apostolic pattern. And that's why John is so heavy handed.

It seems with these false teachers. In the second half of his letter. Next week. Myself and a few others are going to Slovakia. For a mission.

We'd value your prayers. We're off to see Chapa. Who I believe many of you know. But we're actually flying to Budapest. Because it's quicker and cheaper. And if you go to Budapest.

They have these lovely thermal spas outside. You go in. They have these big open air pools. And people sit there. Reading. Talking. Playing chess. Doing handstands.

[16:01] All kinds of things. Just enjoying the continental heat. And the warm spa waters. We have no time. I'm afraid. For the spas. But. In the Roman Empire.

That was very much where people went. To have a bath. They went to a bath house. And one of the early church writers. Told a story about John. And he and his friends. Went to have a bath one day.

And into the bath house. There was a man called Serinthus. Who was a notorious heretic. And he walked in. And somebody told John. That Serinthus was coming in. To have a bath. And John leapt up.

And he ran out of the door. And he said to his friends. Let us flee. Lest the bath fall. For Serinthus. The enemy of truth. Is within. John didn't treat.

False teaching lightly. He wouldn't even share a. A spa. With a heretic. And that's why he says. In verse 7. That Christians ought to be very careful. Many deceivers.

[17:01] Have gone out. Into the world. We saw in verse 4. Didn't we? That some of this lady's children. Are walking in the truth. But in verse 7. There were many.

Who were deceiving. In verse 4. John commands the Christians. To walk in the truth. But in verse 9. We find these false teachers. Weren't walking.

They were going ahead. Running ahead. In verse 2. We saw that the truth of the gospel. Abides. Remains. In us.

That is John. And the genuine believers. But in verse 9. These false teachers. Did not abide. In the teaching of Christ.

They went ahead. They had a new commandment. And not one from God. So they look like Christians. They went around preaching. But John says.

[17:56] They have a very different message. And the message is in verse 7. They went out into the world. And they did not confess. The coming of Jesus Christ.

In the flesh. In the early church. There were two. Sort of extreme poles. There was one group. Called the Ebionites. Who said. Well. Jesus Christ.

He was just a man. Just a prophet. A bit like John the Baptist. And I suppose. A contemporary example. Would be the teachings of Islam. That Jesus is just a prophet. He is just a man.

He is not divine. But at the other extreme. You had a group called the Docetics. Who said. Well. Jesus Christ. He is divine. But he is not really human. It's just a mask.

Just a front. So two groups. One who denied his divinity. And the other who denied his humanity. And verse 7. Seems to suggest. That this group.

[18:49] Were denying his humanity. They do not confess. The coming of Jesus Christ. In the flesh. You remember. The gospel of John.

Begins by telling us. That the word. Became flesh. And dwelt among us. And here. The false teachers. Are saying. No he didn't. He never became man.

He was some kind of spirit creature. That's what the Jehovah's Witnesses. Would tell you. Today. Well. What's the problem there? Well. The problem is this. If Christ did not become man.

There is no salvation. The author to the Hebrews. Says this. Since therefore. The children. Share in flesh. And blood. Jesus himself.

Partook of the same things. That through death. He might destroy. The one who has the power of death. That is the devil. And deliver all those. Who through fear of death.

[19 : 45] Were subject to slavery. For surely. It is not angels. That he helps. But he helps. The offspring of Abraham. Therefore. He had to be made like his brothers.

In every respect. So that he might become a merciful. And faithful high priest. In the service of God. To make propitiation. For the sins of the people.

Adam fell. A man was deceived by Satan. Fell into sin. And brought death into the world. And yet God promised him. That one of his offspring.

Would bruise the serpent's head. That a man. Would bring redemption. Jesus had to be made like his brothers. In every respect. That he might destroy the devil.

That he might provide forgiveness of sin. And he might free us from the power. And the fear of death. The word became flesh. So their message looked similar.

[20 : 42] But it pulled the rug. From under the entire system. Of salvation. And it was dangerous. Verse 8. Watch yourselves. That you may not lose. What we have worked for. But may win a full reward.

Watch out. That the church is not destroyed. By this teaching. This church. For which you have labored. Might be blown apart. By this false teaching. And the solution.

Therefore. In verse 10. Is not to partner with them. If anyone comes to you. And does not bring this teaching. That is the apostolic teaching. Do not receive him. Into your house.

Or give him any greeting. For whoever greets him. Takes part. Partners. In his wicked works. In the ancient world.

Giving someone a greeting. Or showing them hospitality. Meant a little bit more. Than just saying hi. It meant taking someone. Into your house. Travelling preachers. Would stay. With Christians.

[21 : 39] In different cities. And if you brought someone. Into your house. You were expected. To shelter them. To feed them. To provide for them. So you were giving them. Practical support.

And I suppose. If you have someone. In your house. It shows that you approve. Of what they're doing. In a way. You're condoning them. And in this situation. It's quite likely. The church met in a house.

Maybe even in the house. Of this lady. And to take a false teacher. Into the house. Probably meant. Giving him. Some time in the pulpit. On a Sunday morning. But says John.

Do not greet them. Don't bring them in. Don't give them practical support. Don't condone. What they're doing. And don't give them air time. Don't give them your pulpit. Why?

Because their teaching. Is so destructive. That it will ruin the church. And people will lose. Their reward. So what is the application of that?

[22 : 37] Well. It means brothers and sisters. That we have to be very discerning. We try in the book room. At the back. To be discerning. In the books we buy. Each title is.

Individually selected. And if there's one. We're not happy with. We'll just take it off the shelves. And if you've bought a book. That you think is. Not helpful. Then please return it. We'll give you your money back.

And we'll take it off the shelves. False teaching hurts people. And so we need to be discerning. In what we read. We need to be discerning. In what we listen to. What church we go to.

What we download online. What conferences we attend. And we need to be discerning. In who we partner with. This lady. Might have offered them hospitality.

And given them practical support. We might be. Funding. A group. Or an organization. Financially. We might be providing. For them practically.

[23 : 32] And we have to ask the question. Are we promoting. The truth. That leads to love. Or are we inadvertently. Partnering. In wicked works.

Now we mustn't go overboard. We mustn't think. That actually. As soon as we step outside. St. George's Tron Church. We're entering a world. Of heresy. Not at all. And we would not.

Encourage that attitude. But we must be discerning. Wherever we are. And whatever we're doing. Whatever we're exposing ourselves. And our families to. To ask the question. Are these new teachings.

New commandments. New theologies. Or is this the apostolic message. Which we heard from the beginning. About the word made flesh. Who gave himself for us.

And our sins. One minister. As he retired. And just as I finish. Was speaking. Some kind of. Special service. And he said.

[24 : 30] At my stage in life. Men like to talk about. The wonderful progress. They've made. In their theological understanding. And of course. We have to make progress. Don't we? We have to grow in grace. And our knowledge of God.

And our love for each other. But this man said. I'm very proud to say. I have made absolutely. No progress. Because I'm still preaching. Christ crucified.

And resurrected. He'd never lost it. He'd never been ashamed. Of the gospel. He'd never sought respectability. And he'd continued. In the old commandment. And the truth once.

Delivered to the saints. So brothers and sisters. As we leave today. Let us concentrate. On that truth. Let us allow that truth. To bring forth. The fruit of love.

In our lives. And let us be very discerning. Whenever we encounter. New theology. Which is in fact. No theology. Let's pray together.

[25 : 30] Father we thank you. That you are love. And that you show that love. By sending your son. To rescue us. To bring us into your family. And to walk.

In the light. To walk in your ways. So we pray Lord. That as we go. We will. Stand firm in that truth. That we will. Accompany that truth.

With. Selfless love. For our brothers and sisters. In Christ. At home and abroad. And our neighbours. In the world. And we ask Lord. That you will help us. To be discerning.

To continue. To walk in your ways. Not to be. Blown around. By every wind of doctrine. But to continue. In the old commandment.

So we thank you. For your wonderful grace. To us. And pray that we might. Encourage and build one another. Up now in our time together. In Jesus name. Amen. Thank you. To■■■is■■■. Amen.

[26 : 30] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Jesus name.

Amen.■■■ Örg1 d.