

Walking in the Truth

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Date: 27 October 2013

Preacher: Terry McCutcheon

[0 : 00] Terry McCutcher is going to be preaching to us this evening from 2 John. Just a little letter comes after 1 John, obviously, and before 3 John.

It's page 1025 in our church Bibles, just one page. And we're going to read together this little letter. From John. The elder. That's how he introduces himself. To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth.

And 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 in love. I rejoice greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.

[1 : 07] And now I ask you, dear lady, not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning. That we love one another. And this is love.

That we walk according to the beginning. That we walk according to his commandments. This is the commandment. Just as you have heard from the beginning. 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. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your household or give him any greeting.

[2 : 14] 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.

Amen. And may God bless to us his word. I invite you to take your Bibles and to turn with me again to the letter of 2 John.

Which you will find in page 1025 of the Pure Bible. 1,025. And as you do so, let me say a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for your word, the Bible. We thank you for the truth of your word. We thank you for the truth of your word. That your word is relevant in every generation and in every place.

[3 : 33] We pray that in our time together this evening, Father, you would convey to us the truth of your word. You would speak to us. And you would help us to make proper application.

And this, our generation. And in here, this place. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, it's good to have all of our young folks back buzzing from the youth weekend away.

And I can see some of the leaders looking like half-shot knives. And I know that as much as you parents enjoy getting a break from your children over this weekend.

I know that equally as true, you can't wait just to get them back home. Parents are very protective of their children. It's a natural instinct. And parents will go to any length to ensure the safety of their children.

And if you have children, no matter what age, then you understand these feelings. These instincts. Parents are always aware of any possible dangers to their children.

[4 : 45] And make sure that their children are not open to any kind of harm. That's the way things are in a healthy family. A healthy family is a place of great love.

Of great care. And great safety. And to have that place of love, that place of care, that place of safety. It requires protection. If children are to be loved and cared for. Then all those who might harm them must be excluded and rejected. And rejected and excluded really severely. Because protecting the children is paramount. That is our chief concern. Well, these are the kind of values we need to hold in mind. As we come to the letter of 2 John. It's a letter about how the church family can be a place of love and unity. But only. Only if it is protected from those that would seek to come in. And to destroy the truth that defines the church. And when we see how this letter is addressed. [5 : 51] Then we realize that we are given clues about how we should understand the letter. Look with me at verse 1. The elder to the elect lady and her children.

And to the last verse. Verse 13. The children of your elect sister greet you. It's family language, isn't it? It sounds as if the letter has been written by an old uncle.

Who's maybe staying with his niece and her children. And he's writing to her sister and her children. But I think, friends, it's highly unlikely that this letter is a letter between two sisters and their children. Notice how it's written. To the elect lady. And we learn in verse 1. That not only the elder. But all who love the truth. Love this lady.

And her children. She doesn't seem to be a regular person. And then, friends, we think about how the Bible is full of examples of the church being referred to as a woman.

[6 : 58] The church as the bride of Christ. And one Peter that we're studying in the morning at the end of the letter. The apostle Peter writes, She who is in Babylon, who is chosen also, greets you.

The Bible is full of the church being referred to. As a woman. And the saints, the Christians, as children. Just look to the last verse of 1 John.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. So I think that the way this letter is addressed to the elect lady and her children.

It's a metaphorical way of referring to a local church. And the Christians in that church. And I don't want to be too dogmatic about it. But that's what I think.

So 2 John is written by the elder. From one local church to another. Who then is the elder? Do we know for sure that it's the apostle John?

[7 : 57] Well, from the second century, people have wondered about this. Who is the elder? One writer even suggested that there was a guy called the elder kicking about at the same time as the apostle John.

Well, as we look at 2 John and 3 John. Well, we see the elder writes just like the apostle John. He uses the same language as John.

The same themes and the same styles as the apostle John. And he lived at the same time as the apostle John. He looks like John.

Sounds like John. Lived at the same time as John. Then I think it's safe to say that the elder is in fact the apostle John. So 2 John is a letter written in a family style by the apostle John from one church to another.

So what is it all about then? Well, we learn the key things straight away in verses 1 and 2. Notice how the truth is so important in John's understanding of the church.

[9 : 03] There in those first two verses. John loves the church and the truth. And also all of those who know the truth love the church.

John and everyone else love the church. Why? Because of the truth. The truth that abides. That lives in us. And will be with us forever.

The truth then. It's the definition of the church. And we love the church because it speaks the truth. And the truth is in us. The reason that people in a local church work together, live together, love together.

Is because they are united together in the truth. The local church is effective and united when everybody acknowledges. The truth of Jesus together. The truth together. The truth. The truth. The truth.

The truth. United in the truth. The truth. The truth.

[10 : 24] Would we disagree about anything in the Bible? Would John understand that? Would John approve of folks dividing over every minute detail? Would he approve of dividing with folks that don't hold the same theological position in exactly the same way as you?

Would John say to you, have absolutely nothing to do with people like that? No, of course he wouldn't. That's not what he means. John in this letter is dealing with the fundamental truths of Jesus Christ.

Nothing less than the fundamental truths of the gospel. If we are to understand what John is talking about, then we need to note two aspects.

Two aspects of John's teaching. Firstly, in verses 1 to 6, the truth unites us in love. The truth unites us in love.

And secondly, verses 7 to 13, the truth divides us from lies. The truth divides us from lies. Well, firstly then, verses 1 to 6, the truth unites us in love.

[11 : 38] Truth isn't the only key word in this letter. The other key word is love. We see it in the opening verses. The truth in John and all believers makes us love in our local churches.

And it causes us to love other churches. Other churches that too hold to the truth. This love in the truth is of such importance to John that he spends verses 4 to 6 emphasizing this.

That this love is found in the church because of the truth. Look at verses 4 to 6. Verse 4. Walking in the truth. And to the end of verse 5.

This is the commandment that we have had from the beginning. That we love one another. So to walk according to his commands, verse 6, is to walk in love. Walking in truth and walking in love are two aspects of the same thing.

The same obedience to Jesus and the Father. So whether John begins with truth or love, he ends up with the same thing. The same obedience to the Father's commands.

[12 : 47] Love and truth are so tightly tied together in John's mind. Love and truth go together. They belong together in church unity. And this is an issue within the church, isn't it?

As there are those who would say that all that matters is that we have unity in love. That maintaining fellowship, unity in love is more important than truth or doctrine in church life.

But what is this love? If we said, okay, let's just continue to love each other regardless of the truth. What is that love? For John, for John, love is as we have already seen.

Love is defined by truth and obedience to the truth. Love in the church, love between the church is obedience to the truth. This love for a fellow church is called out of us by the truth.

The truth in us. As John writes in the opening verses to the elder, to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth. And not only I, but also who know the truth because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever.

[14 : 04] We love in the truth because of the truth that is in us. So it is as if the truth in us responds to the truth that is proclaimed and lived by other churches.

We love our fellow churches around the world because of the truth in them and the truth in us. Truth calls out to truth. That's what John is talking about. The truth in us responds, calls out to the truth we hear and see in our fellow churches.

When we see that another lives and speaks the truth, the truth within us stirs. When we hear of a church or a Christian anywhere in the world faithfully speaking and living the truth, the truth within us loves them.

We are one with them. But on the other hand, when we hear those who call themselves Christians denying or betraying the truth, the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, we feel grieved, don't we?

We feel grieved that the name and the reputation of the Lord Jesus Christ has suffered loss. The truth unites us in love, in common cause, common life, common purpose.

[15 : 20] If there is no truth, then there can't really be any church unity. The more faithfully and clearly and simply the truth is lived and spoken, then the more love and unity the church will enjoy.

The truth unites us in love. But secondly, the truth divides us from lies. We are united by the truth in love, but when the truth is rejected, we dare not continue in unity.

The truth must divide us from lies. John begins with a warning in verse 7. In verse 4, he was pleased that so many are walking in the truth and love.

But verse 7, they need to be warned. They need to be warned and protected from the deceivers who reject the truth. And again, we need to be careful here.

Notice the fundamental character of the deception here. The deceivers, verse 7, do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. John's churches were clearly experiencing a fundamental attack on the identity of Jesus.

[16 : 36] Perhaps the deceivers were teaching that Jesus only appeared to be human. Or maybe they taught that Jesus was fully human, but he was not the pre-existent divine son.

Either way, whether they denied his true humanity or his true deity, they ended up denying the real Jesus Christ as scripture describes him. A real physical human, fully man, who is also the true and living God.

The denial of the real authentic Jesus took that form in John's day. But probably the biggest attack in our day is the uniqueness of Jesus. Jesus presented himself repeatedly as the Lord God, who is the only way, the only truth, the only life for the whole world.

This inclusive offer from Jesus, offering free access for everybody to God the Father, but this inclusive offer is perceived as being an exclusive and offensive claim by those who reject Jesus as the true and living God.

For those who see Jesus as one of the many religious options, the real Jesus must be rejected. He cannot be the true and living God come in the flesh, for if he was that, then all other religious options are irrelevant or rebellious.

[18 : 03] So John's warning about deceivers in the world is always relevant. The identity of Jesus will be under attack in every generation and in every place.

In fact, there were two public meetings this week in Glasgow doing that very thing. The public meetings were advertised about a month ago in the Herald, which is where I'm reading from. Plans for two Scottish lectures by a controversial American preacher. are to be discussed by the Church of Scotland figures at a meeting next week. Glasgow Presbytery is expected to seek to address concerns raised by some church figures over the booking of Bishop Jack Spong, an Episcopalian who rejects the idea of a supernatural God and does not believe Christ died for man's sins.

Mr. Spong, who also rejects the virgin birth and believes the resurrection was not a physical rising, has attracted admirers and critics alike. A church spokesman said, no concerns were raised with the presbytery over Mr. Spong's views and the public lectures are expected to go ahead as planned.

And this week they did in a church in Mogai and a church in Giffnock, £12 a ticket. The identity of Jesus Christ will always be under attack in every generation and in every place.

[19 : 33] The specific details of the attack may vary but its character always remains the same. It is against Christ. It is anti-Christ.

So what should the church do about this? If we are a family, a family united by the truth and love, what can we do to protect the church family from these deceivers?

Just as parents are so careful and protective of their children, so each church must take proper steps to protect the church family. In verse 8, John puts it bluntly, if these anti-Christ deceivers are allowed to harm the church's children, then all the work will be lost.

although most of us might just have a stomach for compromise rather than conflict, John warns us that compromise over the true identity of Jesus Christ will not bring peace but will bring disaster and ruin to the church.

There is no easy way out here. We have to protect the church from those who attack the fundamental truth of Jesus' identity. John puts the matter in such a clear way in verse 9.

[20 : 51] He says, Everyone who goes on ahead or everyone who runs ahead and does not abide does not remain in the teaching of Christ does not have God.

Whoever abides, whoever remains in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. Everyone who goes ahead. The deceivers usually think that they have found a new truth or a deeper insight or a way of seeing things that previous generations weren't able to see.

Something that is much more relevant to life today. They speak about going on to maturity, about leaving behind outdated ways of thinking. They don't sing, Tell me the old, old story, the old, old story of Jesus and his love.

No, instead, they sing, Tell me the new, new story. They have gone on ahead to new ways of thinking. Well, when we hear that sort of talk, just as John heard it back in the day, then the words of John need to echo in our minds.

Anyone like this does not have God. Far from going on ahead, they have actually lost everything, falling far behind.

[22 : 10] But those who steadily and faithfully abide, who remain in the teaching, in the truth, has both the Father and the Son. Verse 9. By sticking to the truth through thick and thin, in season and out of season, the church enjoys the very highest and the deepest that the spiritual world has to offer.

The intimate fellowship of God the Father and God the Son. If we really want to run, to go ahead, then we must patiently continue in what was given long ago in the Scriptures.

The faith once delivered to the saints, the truth. Well, in verse 10 and 11, John tells us how to protect the church family from the deceivers who reject this ancient and liberating truth.

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.

It's clear, isn't it? Don't give them house room. Remember at the time, the church would have met in houses, in house churches. churches. So don't let them into the church and give them a platform to flood the church with lies.

[23 : 35] Remember, too, that John is speaking to those who reject the clear identity of Jesus Christ, of Jesus Christ as presented in the Scriptures and preached by his apostles.

We're not here dealing with Christians who hold a different position on things like the second coming or a mode of baptism. No, guys like this are still brothers and are welcome.

John here is dealing with the question of protecting the church family from those who deny the truth of the gospel. Guys like Mr. Spong that we read of earlier, guys like him should never be allowed anywhere near a Christian church, according to John.

John here is teaching that we must protect the church family just as carefully, just as lovingly and robustly as we would protect our children from danger.

The deceivers, I am sure, would have been very polite, sincere people, very charming and very nice. But their teaching will cause devastating ruin to the church if we give any kind of approval or authority to them.

[24 : 48] Think about in the business world. you wouldn't hire a dodgy, fraudulent accountant to deal with your books, would you? No. Whether there were nice, polite and charming people, of course you wouldn't.

The consequences would be absolutely disastrous and your business might never recover from the damage that is done. That's what this is all about. The truth must divide us from lies and those that preach them.

Receiving the deceivers into your house, your church, that is about giving that person approval and authority. And we need to think carefully about our actions so that we don't unintentionally, perhaps, give approval or authority to a deceiver.

We cannot receive them in any way. Or else people might listen to what they're saying. People might think, well, if they don't have a problem with that, then obviously their teaching can't be all that bad.

So then we need to take care when inviting folks to speak in the church. Say, for example, in the ladies' fellowship. We need to take great care at release the word when recommending books for our students to read.

[26 : 00] We need to be careful too in our own homes and be careful when watching, say, Sky TV, where at the touch of a button our homes can be filled with the teaching of endless amounts of deceivers.

In our world, we might think that it's trivial to have someone round for a bite to eat or for a cup of tea. But it is perhaps worth remembering the values from the Bible from the time John is writing. Sharing table fellowship is of great significance and it conveys approval, acceptance, and fellowship. Deceivers cannot be given that kind of approval or authority or any approval or authority. We could never allow them to preach in our pulpits. Would it be right to ever share a platform with a person who calls themselves a Christian but denies the fundamental truths of Jesus? could we ever share a platform with such a person? We need to think about all these things, don't we? As we seek to protect the church family, the pillar and buttress of truth.

[27 : 12] To understand what John is saying, we must always remember the context of his teaching. John is not waging war with people he disagrees with, but he is desperately trying to protect the church family from serious danger.

If we reject the deceivers because we love the truth and we love the church family, then we are in harmony walking in the truth, the truth that unites us together in love and the truth that divides us from lies.
Amen. Amen. Amen.