

# SERVICE - 7.7.2024

## PROMINENT TRUTH: Part 1 - 2John 1-3

### LOVING THE TRUTH

Main Point: We are called to be a people who love the truth, and there is a wonderful blessedness for those who abide in it.

### I. INTRODUCTION TO 2 JOHN (1)

- What we have here is one of the shortest books of the bible. Second and third John are both under 250 words, third John being the shortest, but they are chock full of gospel truth.
- Penned by the apostle John by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we see a succinct delivery here in his second letter giving admonishments, encouragement, and commands to the believers he's writing to.
- He writes with a strong emphasis on the themes of love, of truth, to take care how we walk out our faith, and to be on guard against false teachers.
- These truths were relevant to the first century church they were sent to, probably delivered on a single piece of papyrus, and they are just as relevant and important for us here today.
- We likewise need this encouragement to hold fast to the truth. To walk in the truth. To be on guard against those who would seek to deceive us and bring another gospel, a false truth, and implant it among us to draw us away from the truth of the gospel.
- In fact these reminders of these themes were so crucial, to believers then and now, that when you read the book of John, and the letters of first, second, and third John, you see these themes repeated in all of them.
- John keeps returning to these themes, coming back to these reminders of love, reminders to cling to the truth, because they are so crucial to the life of a believer and to the church.
- A church is likely who he's writing this letter to. It says in vs 1 of second John "The elder to the elect lady and her children". Now John is not named here like when we see Paul introduce his letters with "Paul, an apostle..", but yet like Paul he's writing with authority. He refers to himself as the elder.
- He's not necessarily saying he's writing as an old man, as in the older or the eldest, though he may have been, but he's writing as The elder, with a position of authority. He didn't need to name himself because he was known, he was familiar to this church. No name was needed.
- And it says he was writing simply to the "elect lady and her children." Some people believe this to be an actual lady, and actual children. More likely though the term the elect lady is a term of personification of the local church, and her children being the saints there.
- And John is taking an opportunity to write a letter of warning to this church regarding false teaching, to be on guard against it, to beware of letting false teachers come in and bring with them another gospel.
- And the apostle John is writing this letter of warning as the elder, with authority, the same authoritative greeting he uses in 3rd John where he writes "The elder to the beloved Gaius".

### II. LOVE OF THE TRUTH (1-2)

- *"The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth"*
- John has a love for those he's writing to. That shouldn't be surprising, he's known as the apostle of love. He referred to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved in John 21:20.
- And in fact, John writes about love more than any other NT author. He uses the word love 38 times just in 1 John alone.
- Love characterizes John. He loves the church. He has a deep and true love towards his brothers and sisters in Christ.
- And he admonishes the saints in both first and second John to love one another, because Christ loved John first and he in turn reflects that love to the household of faith, towards those who have also experienced

the love of Christ themselves.

- This isn't the only time he uses this term, as he says the same thing in third John 1 "The elder to the beloved Gaius, **whom I love in truth.**"

## Love

- Well we might just think John is saying that I love you in truth, or I truly love you. But look at how he continues to expound on this concept of truth - to the church whom I love in truth, and those who know the truth, and have the truth abiding in us, and have the truth with us forever.
- So John is getting into something more here than saying "it's true, I love you".
- We tend to use the term love for a range of meanings and we're not unique in that.
- The Greek language in fact has 3 words for love - 3 distinct expressions of it: Eros, Phileo, and Agape.
- Eros is that romantic love; Phileo is brotherly love, love for a friend, it's not gender related, but a love for your bestie.
- And then there is Agape. The unconditional, unending, sacrificial, immense, and strong love of God that stretches farther and stronger than we could hope to describe. It's the love of a God who is love and would even result in him sending his own son as a sacrifice for sinful man, all on account of his great love towards us.
- **1 John 4:9–10 9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**
- That is his agape love in action and on display. His love was made manifest among us! The love of God himself, shown to us in a way that didn't respond to our own love, or lack of love, but being first in love showed us his love through the sending of his only son!
- God's love is perfect, and it is true. It must be because he is the source of love, and the source of truth.
- And John here specifies his love for those he's writing to is in the context also - of truth.

## Truth

- If truth is relative, if its objective, if there is no standard on which to base truth on, then it's not truly truth. For truth to be true, it must be unchangeable, immutable, and firm.
- And so there must be only one source of truth, one firm foundation on which we can base our definition of what is true, what is morally good and right, and upon which we can discern truth from error.
- And that is the maker of the universe. The one who set all things in motion.
- The one who is truth itself, who speaks only what is true, who can be the definition for what is true because he is holy and unstained by sin, thereby being a pure standard of perfection against which we can define what is true and good and right.
- Without a being like him to measure truth against, truth is objective, it's relative, and unfounded.
- This is why so many, when faced with truth, choose to deny the truth, or turn away from the truth, suppress the truth, or accept a myth, or a lie in place of the truth.
- They say, "I don't want to accept the authority of the Lord, I want to be my own lord, make my own rules, validate my sin and my desires and declare them to be acceptable instead of submitting to what the God of the universe has declared to be right and wrong."
- Booker T Washington famously said "*A lie doesn't become truth, wrong doesn't become right, and evil doesn't become good, just because it's accepted by a majority.*"
- And yet sadly that's exactly what we see today. Lies have become accepted as true, wrong is labeled as right, and evil is touted as good and desirable in our nation.
- The question of what is truth is just as pertinent now, maybe more so even, than when John wrote to these believers concerning the truth.
- What truth exactly was he writing to them of? The truth of the gospel. The truth about Jesus Christ. The truth that God took on the form of man to be the sacrifice for sins so that all who would trust in Christ might have their sins forgiven, their debt erased, and their adoption into the family of God secured forever.
- It's why the statement which Jesus made in John 14:6 is so radical! "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
- There is no other truth, no other means of salvation, no other way to have a relationship with God, no other source of truth except this gospel truth right here!

## Love in truth

- And so John says to the recipients of his letter he loves them in truth. He is expressing his love for them in the context of gospel truth.

- The love of God, that beautiful love which he has shown to his people can be now reflected by the recipients of that love to one another, expressed in the context of the truth of the gospel which they share. Isn't that beautiful?
- Without experiencing the love of God ourselves, how would we be able to show that? If you haven't lately, stop right now and reflect on the agape love of God he has for you! He loved you and chose you before the foundations of the world.
- He loved you knowing the sin and rebellion that would emanate from your heart. He loved you completely, and purely, and perfectly before you ever loved him.
- And John in light of that truth, in light of the love he has experienced, and those he's writing to have experienced, can say "I love you in truth". It's amazing.

### Those who know the truth

- This love extends to them not just from John but also from all those who know the truth. From all those who know the truth of the gospel, and have received it joyfully.
- This isn't an intellectual knowledge of the gospel. There are some who can repeat the gospel verbatim, who have heard the truth and can repeat the truth and yet don't know it.
- This love extends to them from those who know the truth only because of the truth that abides in us. The love of God that they share in truth extends to the whole household of faith and it's only because of that love.
- We are to love our neighbor as we love ourself. We are to love our enemies. To do good to those who persecute us. But there is a special love that fellow believers have for one another.
- In fact, that love is an indicator of the truth in us. It's an identifier or a badge we wear. **1 John 3:14 "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers."**
- **John 13:35 "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."**
- This love doesn't come naturally. It doesn't come from ourselves. Christians aren't naturally agape loving people. It comes because of the truth that abides in us.

### Because of the truth that abides in us

- This same truth that John keeps coming back to provides this ongoing context in which love is shown. John wrote earlier "whom I love in truth". That is a present tense verb of a current action of love being expressed in truth.
- And now he says that all those who know the truth have love "because of the truth that abides in us." That abiding in us is a continuing, ongoing action of abiding in truth. Staying in the truth. Holding to the truth, day in and day out.
- Paul gave Timothy a charge to teach and preach the word to the people of God because, as he warned in 2 Tim 4:3 **"3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."**
- We are not to be those people; we instead must cling to the truth by listening to it, knowing it, and continuing on in the truth of the gospel so that we don't turn away, so that we don't wander off into myths. There are plenty of them floating around.
- That turning away, that wandering to some other truth - it's exactly the opposite of what it means to abide in the truth. To continue in the truth. {Pause}
- The apostle John wrote these glorious words of Christ in the book of John chapter 8:31-32 **31 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."**
- Those who abide in the truth will know the truth and are set free! Free from the penalty of sin! Being freed daily through sanctification from the power of sin! Free to live for Christ! Free to extend this agape love of God to the family of God.
- And as long as the truth abides in us, the love of God will continue to be extended from us towards those who also know the truth and abide in the truth.

### And will be with us forever.

- How long will that be? We have come to know the truth, the truth abides in us continually, and it will be with us forever.
- Some will fall away from the truth. Many already have. Some will wander off into myths. But we cling to the truth, the gospel of Jesus Christ, our only sure foundation, the rock on which we stand.

- Christ will be ours forever, because he made us his own, purchased our pardon, paid our ransom, redeemed us, and sacrificed himself for us.
- And there is nothing and no one who can now or forever negate that glorious gospel truth that we are his, and he is ours! Praise God!
- And because of that truth, the love of God extends from us and through us towards those who also know the truth, have the truth in them, and have it for eternity.

### III. BLESSEDNESS OF THE TRUTH (3)

- **“Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father’s Son, in truth and love.”**
- There is a blessedness that comes with knowing the truth, having the truth abiding in us, and remaining with us forever.
- We are given grace, mercy, and peace, not like the world gives in a partial, or broken, or self-serving way, but in a way that is divine, given from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father’s Son.

#### Grace

- The grace he shows us is amazing, infinite, and glorious. That grace is completely undeserved on our part and yet we are recipients of it in great measure.
- For it is by grace that we are saved through faith, and this isn’t anything of ourselves, it’s the gift of God, the Father, not based on anything we could do lest we should boast.
- He himself is full of grace. As is his son, Jesus Christ.
- John attests to this in John 1 when he writes in verse **“14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”**
- The son came down to earth full of grace and truth. That same truth which abides in us and continues with us. That same grace which is extended to us in full measure!
- Jump down 2 verses to John 1:16 **“16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”**
- From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace! From the fullness of God himself we have received grace upon grace upon grace!
- But not just that grace, though that grace was immense, greater than all my sin, but grace upon grace! Grace in every time of need, grace for every struggle, grace for every failure, grace when I’ve got nothing left - his grace is sufficient!
- Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ! Praise God! Again, we see these connections to the truth. Love, connected to truth. Grace, connected to truth. That truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ which shines as a light in a dark world and which dwells in our hearts and will be with us forever!

#### Mercy

- We tend to think of mercy as compassion or kindness towards someone who can’t repay it, those who are poor and needy, or mercy on a prisoner by showing leniency in a verdict or sentence.
- But the mercy of God shown to those of the truth goes so much farther than that. It’s divine mercy that is shown through his forgiveness of our sins. Our sins deserved to be paid for, “for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” as Romans tells us.
- His mercy is shown on a whole other scale towards us because He sent his own son to pay for our sins, his blood was shed, and now we who are of the truth have the blessing, and are the recipients, of his divine mercy!
- It’s exactly what Paul hammers home to the Ephesians in Ephesians chapter 2 where he reminds them “they were dead in their trespasses and sins”, that they “were by nature children of wrath”, and then in verse 4 he exclaims **“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ”**.
- He showed divine mercy to those who were completely undeserved through Christ Jesus. Not because of what we’d done or what we would do. Not because we could repay him because we can’t.
- But because He is a God who is merciful. It’s a divine attribute. It’s why he’s rich in mercy because it’s who He is.
- Titus 3:4-7 lays it all out for us as to his mercy: **“4 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured**

**out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”**

- Wow! He saved us, not because of our works, but according to his own mercy, that divine mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ!
- And now, having been justified by his grace we are now heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
- We have been immensely blessed with the richness of his mercy, we are blessed to be sons and daughters and heirs of God, because we know the truth - Jesus Christ our Savior.

## Peace

- Divine peace isn't the absence of conflict. It's an expression of an attribute of God, as Hebrews, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians all call him the "God of peace", and that peace has been shown or gifted to us who know the truth.
- Romans 5:1 declares **"1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."**
- Because of the truth, because we know the truth, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ!
- And now because we have peace with God, John expresses the peace from God towards all who know the truth.
- Philippians describes it as the *"peace which passes all understanding, and which will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."*
- Jesus said in John 14:27 **"27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."**
- This peace that comes from God brings us to a state of simply trusting him. It is the blessed assurance of knowing that our salvation is secured.
- It is the peace that comes with finding him sufficient for every moment, and the peace we feel as we find rest in him when the day is hard.
- It is the peace that comes when we run to him in the midst of chaos or unrest. The peace we find in him when loved ones pass or phases of life move on to the next chapter.
- The world doesn't offer that kind of peace. It can't offer any surety that'd supply it. But for those that know the truth, there is a blessing of peace offered to us.

## Blessing From

- In fact, all three of these - grace, mercy, and peace, are all blessings for us who know the truth. It says they will be with us.
- And they come from God the Father. And they come from Jesus Christ, the Father's son.
- Grace, mercy, and peace come from the Father. And grace, and mercy, and peace come from Jesus Christ, the messiah who is the Father's son.
- Grace, mercy, and peace flow FROM the father. The fount of blessing. We are recipients of that in great and underserved measure!
- And grace and mercy and peace flow FROM the son! Jesus, the messiah, the son of God. One with the Father, one in nature, and yet a distinct member of the God-head.
- And before you ask how this can be, John tells us it's again "in truth and love". Truth and love!
- The father and the son are one in truth. There is only one truth they share. And they are one in love! A perfect, infinite, immense love, an essence of their being, God is love! And the Father and the son have a perfect loving relationship.
- And so we receive these blessings from them in truth, and love. Grace, mercy, and peace shown to us who are in Christ, via that wonderful conduit of truth and love.
- We are exhorted to be a people who love the truth. Known by our love for each other, towards all who also know the truth. Cling to that truth. Desire it. And lovingly manifest it. And with that, from the fount of all blessings in truth and love, will come from the Father, and from the Son, Grace and Mercy and Peace which will be with us, in bountiful measure as only he can give.

## APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?

- With whom can I share the gospel this week?