

Walking in the Truth

September 3, 2009

Let's face it. When was the last time you studied 2 and 3 John or Obadiah or Haggai? I've been walking in the Lord for last twenty two years, I never had done it. Somehow we think that these are less important Books than others because they are short and not well known.

Contrary to our opinion, the Lord thinks that they are important enough to be included in canonization of the Bible.

A. TIMELINE AND TARGET AUDIENCE

The Second Epistle of John was probably written at about the same time as 1 John or maybe shortly thereafter. We don't know whom this letter was written to, but it appears to be addressed to a particular Christian lady and her family. Some commentators have concluded that 'the elect lady' refers to a local church and that 'her children' are the believers fellowshipping in the church. I disagree.

B. THEME

By the time you finish this 13 verse Book, you will notice one word repeats itself over and over – TRUTH. Why truth? What is so important about truth that this aging apostle John – many believe that he was in the late 90s when he wrote this letter – tried so hard to get cross his point to us.

Apostle Paul echoes John for the importance of the truth in his famous epistle Ephesian 6 – the full armor of God. He didn't start his armor with the Sword of the Spirit or the Helmet of Salvation or the Breastplate of Righteousness, rather the Belt of Truth. Why is the truth so important to God and should be so important to us? Everything God has and has for us is based on the truth which is not negotiable, it is unchanging.

In addition to that, Jesus Christ Himself is the truth. I am running ahead of myself here. Let's jump into the texts directly.

C. WE MUST KNOW THE TRUTH

2 John:1-3 The Elder, To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, 2 because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: 3 Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Apostle John uses the word 'truth' four times in these three verses. Truth means 'reality' as opposed to mere appearance. I mentioned to you that Jesus Christ Himself is the truth and God's Word is truth.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

The truth is not only an objective revelation from the Father God, but also a subjective experience in our personal lives. We can not only know the truth, but we can "love in the truth" and "live for the truth's sake."

What does it mean when John said, “the elect lady”? It means that she was chosen by God. Anyone who is born-again is elected and chosen by God.

Romans 8:29-30 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Ephesians 1:5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Ephesians 1:11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

How did this elect lady and her children come to know the truth and become children of God? Of course, through the grace and mercy of God. We are not saved by God’s love, but by His grace which is love that paid a price. The true definition of God’s love for mankind was displayed on the cross – the sinless God sacrificed Himself for the price of the sin of mankind that we might have eternal life in Him. God is not at war with lost sinners. It is sinners who are at war with God.

D. WALKING IN TRUTH AND LOVE

2 John:4-6 I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. 5 And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. 6 This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

Truth and love are two very powerful aspects of the Christian life. These are inseparable. You may hear me making an illustration in this way about truth and love, but hear me again:

Love is like a river that can enrich the surrounding areas with its water. And truth is like river banks that holds the river in the right place. Truth without love is like the river banks without a river and it is bone dry and cannot help others a whole lot. A river without the river banks is uncontrollable. It would destroy the surrounding areas with flood because it does not have any discretion – anything and everything is allowed.

Truth without love can make a person harsh and offensive to others. Love without truth can make a person naive and gullible to deception.

God’s truth is not just something we keep in our heads. It is something that lives in our hearts. To know God is to love Him. This love of God abides in us and changes everything about us. God’s truth is not a passing trend. Like God Himself, His truth abides with us forever and changes not. Many people today think that the truth changes from generation to generation, and culture to culture.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

In NT language, the word “walking” simply refers to the way a person lives. So, ‘walking in truth’ would imply that a person is living according to the truth of God. The only way a person can walk in truth is if he or she first knows the truth. And the only way to know the truth is to know the Word of God.

The integrity of our Christian life can be measured by our love for one another. John is declaring to us that the commandments of the New Covenant are not new commandments. The commandment to love has always been top priority on God's agenda whether we read the OT or NT.

Deuteronomy 6:5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

John 13:35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

E. BEWARE OF DECEIVERS AND ANTICHRISTS

2 John:7-11 For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

8 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. 9 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; 11 for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

Though we are to love everyone, this doesn't mean we trust everyone. There is a big difference between loving and trusting. We can truly love without being gullible. The Bible repeatedly warns us to beware of deceivers and know the difference between the truth and a lie. Sometimes the most loving thing you can do is to point out a lie or to warn others of a deceiver.

The Christian faith stands or falls on the doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ. If He is only man, then He cannot save us, because he had to deal with his own sinful nature no matter how gifted or unique He might be. If He is not God come in human flesh, then the Christian faith is lies.

Galatians 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

If you look at all the cults, they all have their connections with the Bible out of context. Two prime examples are Jehovah's Witness and Mormons.

Jehovah's Witness claims:

Jesus is not God. Before he lived on earth, he was Michael, the archangel. Jehovah made the universe through him. On earth he was a man who lived a perfect life. After dying on the stake (not a cross), he was resurrected as a spirit. His body was destroyed. Jesus is not coming back again. He 'returned' invisibly in 1914 in spirit. Very soon, he and the angels will destroy all non-Jehovah's Witnesses.

Mormonism claims:

Jesus is a separate god from the Father (Elohim). He was created as a spirit child by the Father and Mother in heaven, and is the 'elder brother' of all men and spirit beings. His body was created through sexual union between Elohim and Mary. Jesus was married. His death on the cross does not provide full atonement for all sin, but does provide everyone with resurrection.

Once again apostle John is defending against the Gnostic heresy of his day that taught Jesus could not have had a body of flesh. Today this warning can also be applied to those who teach that Jesus didn't really come at all. Some modern day liberals teach that the Jesus story is just a myth compiled from various mythological gods of times past. They would have you believe that the Jesus we read about in the Bible never really came as the Christ.

Hollywood and media world are very happy to jump on their bandwagon. A good example is 'Da Vinci Code'. Know that these are deceivers and antichrists. Do not be deceived by their lies.

'Antichrist' means 'against Christ' or 'replacing Christ.' V9 makes it clear that if anyone denies Christ, that person is denying the Father. The Father God and Jesus come in a package deal. You cannot have one and not the other. But the way to have both is to abide in Christ's teachings. To 'abide' means to 'remain in' and implies both a knowledge of and a practice of the teachings of Christ.

In John's day Christians would welcome traveling evangelists and teachers into their home and give them the hospitality of food and housing along their way. At the same time, Christians here are exhorted not to entertain or greet with partnership those whose mission is to preach a false Gospel.

Sometime ago, I mentioned to you that when Jehovah's Witnesses came to my home, a couple of times I invited them in to show the true definition of Greek from my Bible computer software when they started to argue with me with their shallow and pre-fabricated Greek knowledge which was completely wrong. Gary Hurley pointed out to me that according to v10 I should have not invite them. I told him that the context of this verse is about allowing the false evangelists or teachers to their Jewish house churches. I believe that I am correct, but at the same time Gary's point is also correct.

Please allow me to explain: I can invite either Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons to my home to show them the truth without any problem. I believe that I am prepared and equipped. But it allows them to go to my next door neighbors and say, "We had a very nice conversation with Pastor Joonho who lives in your next door and we had a wonderful talk." My freedom could very well lead to someone else's destruction.

In light of that condition, I will not allow them to come into my home in future anymore. I will simply tell them, "Jesus of Jehovah's Witness is not the same as my Jesus who is God Himself. What you believe is not true and you do not have salvation for true eternal life in heaven but I have it through Him." Instead of saying, "God bless you," I will say, "I hope and pray that you can find the truth of Jesus Christ one true God." as apostle John is giving us an instruction in v10.

Does it mean we can not invite unbelieving neighbors to our homes for dinner to evangelize? Friendship evangelism around the table is a wonderful way to win people to Christ. Christians need to be neighborly and hospitable.

F. HOPING TO MEET YOU AGAIN

2 John:12-13 Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. 13 The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) The truth is not only an objective revelation from the Father God, but also a subjective experience in our personal lives.

2) The integrity of our Christian life can be measured by our love for one another.

- 3) The Christian faith stands or falls on the doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ.
- 4) Proclaim that Jesus is your God to anyone you have contact with.