



**“I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father” (II John 4).**

## **Cling to the Truth**

**Central Truth:** Believers walk in truth because they love the truth.

**L260. Date:** February 1990. **Text:** II John 1-13.

**Topic:** Discipleship; **Doctrine:** Truth: Of God.

Here is the only epistle in the New Testament written to a woman. Some scholars think John addressed a church under the feminine gender. But a reference to the “elect lady” and her children, as well as her “sister,” indicates that a person was the recipient of the epistle. Who was she?

Little is known about her. She was probably named Kyria. Her devotion to the Lord is well attested. She seemed to have lived in one of the cities near Ephesus and to have been known in her own community and in the surrounding area. Her house may have been a meeting place of the local church, since there were no church buildings erected in those days. She seems to have been a widow with adult children. The apostle John had met some of her sons and found them devoted Christians. Tradition has identified her as Martha, the sister of Lazarus and Mary, but there is no foundation in fact to support that idea. She was a typical Christian lady of the day.

The second epistle of John relates to more than one woman. It applies to individual Christians today. And it applies to congregations of Christians making up churches everywhere. It is a call to faithfulness and holiness.

The second epistle of John is built around four principles which are stated in four words: *truth, love, doctrine, and fellowship*. Watch them develop as we review the text.

### **I. TRUTH (II John 1-4)**

**A. What is truth?** It is that which is actual, which conforms to fact, which agrees with reality. It is opposite to all that is false, inaccurate, in error, or wrong.

In the Bible, truth commonly refers to what God has revealed in words and actions. Jesus is the truth. We who trust Him are of the truth. The Word of God is the word of truth. To be saved is to come to the knowledge of the truth. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. The Bible is the Word of truth. Truth stands for all that God is and does.

The Christian is to love the truth, walk in the truth, teach the truth, and be true in his own spirit. Truth is the guideline of the Christian life.

**B. How can we know the truth?** We must know the Bible to know the truth. Jesus said, "*Thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). The more we know Jesus, who is "*the way, the truth, and the life,*" the more we will know the truth (John 14:6). Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The record of Jesus contained in the Bible is the record of truth. Studying the Bible to know God as He has revealed himself in Jesus is the way to full truth.

**C. How can we love the truth?** We love the truth by loving God. The person who rejects God can never know ultimate truth. As one learns what is true, he rejects what is false. We love truth as we reject error. No one can love the truth of God unless he rejects every false way. Cultivating a love for God will lead to a love for truth.

**D. How can truth dwell in us?** It dwells in us as the Spirit of God and the Word of God dwell in us. There must be a continual forsaking of error. There must be a continual seeking for truth. As one grows in knowledge, retaining what he learns, the truth dwells in him more and more.

But an act of the will is involved. As there must be a hunger for food and the act of eating it to satisfy that hunger, so there must be a desire for truth and a diligent seeking after it. The reward is well worth the effort.

**E. How can we walk in the truth?** The elect lady and her children were marked by their walking in the truth (II John 4). That means their lifestyles were in agreement with and no violation of the principles of right. There was no hypocrisy in their relationships with God, no heresy in their belief of doctrine, and no injustice in their dealings with people. They were upright in act and attitude. Nothing false or improper in their hearts or conduct could be sustained against them. They were living examples of the new life in Christ.

## **II. LOVE (II John 5, 6)**

You are aware that in reading John's writings we will surely come

across the subject of love. That subject was so important to him that we call him “the apostle of love.” What a change occurred in a man whom Jesus once called a “son of thunder”! But the love of God broadcast in the heart by the Holy Spirit makes a difference in each Christian.

**A. What is love?** Three primary words were commonly used in the New Testament days, each reflecting some aspect of love. One word meant sexual passion. That is not the word John uses in this text. Another was a word meaning deep affection, strong attachment, a desire to possess the loved one. That is a good word describing a wholesome emotion, but it is not the word John uses here. The third is a word meaning benevolent concern, willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of the beloved, a love without merit or without demanding anything in return, the love of God. That is John's word here! Christian love (as John uses it) means that we treat others the same way and in the same attitude as God treats us.

**B. Why are we commanded to love?** Verse 5 speaks of the command to love, saying it is not new but the same commandment we have had from the beginning. But why must a Christian be commanded to love others?

(1) We are commanded to love because depraved human nature is not loving. Instead, we are “*hateful, and hating one another*” (Titus 3:3). We can love only because we have met God and His love has been placed within us.

(2) We are commanded to love because our tendency is toward selfishness. Jesus urged us to continue to love as He and the Father continue to love each other (John 15:9). We are warned not to love the “*world*” (I John 2:15), because that danger is always present.

(3) We are commanded to love because that witness is needed by the world. By loving one another we show the difference Jesus makes and are a testimony that God sent Him into the world to be our Savior (John 13:35).

**C. How is love related to obedience?** If we love God we will obey Him (II John 6). If we do not obey Him, it is a sign that we do not love Him (John 14:23). Love and obedience go hand in hand as a Christian lives for God.

### III. DOCTRINE (II John 7-11)

“*Many deceivers are entered into the world. . . . Look to yourselves*” (verses 7, 8).

**A. What is doctrine?** Doctrine is something taught, the tenets of religion, the principles or creeds of faith. A doctrine may be true or false, for the term itself merely refers to the principle taught. John speaks of true

doctrine, that which becomes the revelation of God.

**B. Why is doctrine needed** (verses 7, 8)? Doctrine is to religion what bones are to the body. It gives support and strength. Here are a few things the Bible says come from good doctrine. (1) It keeps from sorrow (I Timothy 6:3-10). (2) It preserves unity (I John 2:19). (3) It promotes stability (Ephesians 4:14). (4) It honors God (I Timothy 6:1). (5) It promotes growth (I Timothy 4:6). (6) It refutes error (Titus 1:9). (7) It keeps from deceptive heresy (I Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 13:9). The list could continue, but that is sufficient to show why we should know and hold to true doctrine.

**C. How is faith related to sound doctrine** (verse 9)? Christian doctrine is the statement of what God has revealed in Jesus Christ. No one can hold Christian doctrine unless he believes in Jesus as the Son of God through whom God has revealed himself. *“Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils”* (1 Corinthians 10:21). Faith enables us to understand and accept the doctrines of Christ.

**D. How do we deal with one who teaches false doctrines?** The Bible gives several guidelines. (1) Admonish him in love (II Thessalonians 3:14, 15; Titus 3:10). (2) Avoid him, if he refuses instruction (Romans 16:17; II Corinthians 6:14). (3) Do not eat with him (I Corinthians 5:11). (4) Withdraw church fellowship from him if he persists in error (II Thessalonians 3:6; I Timothy 6:5; II Timothy 3:5). That seems severe, but the offense is severe.

#### **IV. FELLOWSHIP (II John 12, 13)**

How John loved the elect lady and her children! He wanted to come to visit personally with them. His letter was brief because he expected to visit shortly. That indicates the fellowship he shared with those dear ones in Christ.

**A. What is Christian fellowship?** A little lad answered that question by saying, “I guess it is two fellows in the same ship.” And it is! Fellowship is friendly association, mutual sharing, a unity of spirit. Christian fellowship is that blessed unity of spirit based on a mutual relationship to Jesus Christ.

**B. With whom can Christian fellowship be shared?** It can be shared with those who are in Christ (Acts 2:41, 42). It can be shared with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 1:9). It can be shared with those who hold the truth, but never with those who are evil (Psalm 1:1, 2; II Corinthians 6:14-18). Be careful with whom you extend fellowship in the religious realm. Christian fellowship is possible only in Christ.

**C. What are the blessings of Christian fellowship?** The Bible lists many. (1) God notes those who share fellowship in Him and approves them (Malachi 3:16). (2) Great encouragement comes to those who fellowship in the assembly of believers (Hebrews 10:25; Proverbs 27:17; II Timothy 1:16). (3) Strength is received through Christian fellowship (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10). One can lift up a fellow believer when he falls. (4) God's special presence is promised, for wherever two or three are gathered in His name He is there in their midst (Matthew 18:20).

Had you thought of such benefits coming through fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ? Go to church. Meet with fellow believers in recreation or business away from the church. Cultivate Christian fellowship and enjoy its benefits.

**D. How can one cultivate Christian fellowship?** Fellowship with God must be established before one can enjoy fellowship with the people of God. Keep yourself prayed up and confessed up with nothing between your soul and your Savior. Then meet regularly with God's people in study, prayer, and worship. Do not give offense to anyone. Do not take offense for any reason. Give yourself to serving others and fellowship will be your great joy.

Here are the principles for living together in your home or in your church: truth, love, doctrine, and fellowship. How can you cultivate those graces in your personal life this week?

### **Questions for discussion**

1. What is unique about the recipient of II John?
2. What is truth?
3. How can you love and walk in the truth?
4. What is love?
5. Why is it necessary for God to command us to love?
6. What is doctrine?
7. Why is doctrine important to our faith?
8. How can you hold sound doctrine?
9. Why is Christian fellowship so important?
10. How can you share Christian fellowship this week?