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“And this is love, that we walk after his commandments,” II John 6a.

Walking in Truth

Lesson Aim: To note that it is God's will that His children walk in the Truth

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Topic: Bible: Inerrancy of; Truth: Of God.

INTRODUCTION—Today, the study is concerned with the message of the Second Epistle of the Apostle John. The key words in this Epistle are “truth” and “love.” This is one of the shortest books in our New Testament but it is packed with valuable and needed lessons for our Christian experience. What is truth? It may be defined as “that which is according to fact.” Now since God is ultimate reality, truth is that which accords with the nature of God.

Today's study aims to help believers to walk in the truth. One walks in truth when he lives according to the principles which are in agreement with the nature and will of God. He who walks in truth will rejoice in upright conduct, pure thoughts, true doctrines, confident faith, and will grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ who said, “I am the truth,” John 14:6.

This study also places an emphasis on love. But this love is not mere sentimentality. It is a “love in the truth”—love built upon the truth of God. The purpose for writing the Epistle is to warn against heresy and to call to loyalty to the truth. The love which is recommended and praised will accomplish this. It must be, therefore, a devotion to God which manifests itself in both loyalty to Him and kindness to men. This is the kind of love needed today.

The Apostle John addresses his Second Epistle to “**eklekta kuria.**” The former words means “elect” and the latter means “lady.” Scholars are unsure whether this is a descriptive phrase (“elect lady”) or a proper name (Eklekta, a lady or Lady Eklekta). They also are not sure whether the Epistle is actually addressed to a woman (if so it is the only one in the New Testament

so addressed) or whether a church is addressed under this feminine terminology. If the latter the lady would be the church and her children would be the members of the church. Either way the message for us is the same. It calls for loyalty to the truth in love.

EXPOSITION

I. ONENESS IN TRUTH, 1-3.

1. Affection.—“**. . . Unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth. . .**” verse 1. A common affinity to the truth will join the hearts of men as nothing else can. Affection based upon the truth in Jesus Christ will be enduring. The truth, which is dealt with in this Second Epistle of John, is spiritual truth- divinely revealed truth. The believer is led to Jesus who said, “**I am . . . the truth,**” John 14:6. By the Holy Spirit he is led into all truth, John 16:13. Being thus “sanctified in truth” (John 17:19) all he does is influenced by it. His affection is according to truth and so is enduring. Can you think of some one whom you love for the truth's sake?

2. Possession.—John deals with truth almost as if it had personality. He writes of it dwelling “in” the believer and being “with us forever,” verse 2. And this is actually true!

God's law is written in the hearts and minds of believers, Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 10:16-17. So long as the Holy Spirit abides in them (John 14:16-17) so long will truth be with and within them. Accept this blessed truth, my brother! God's truth is your present possession. Live according to that truth.

3. Blessing.—“**Grace be with you, mercy, and peace . . . in truth and love,**” verse 3. Because of the truth of God, grace and mercy and peace are available to men. What assurance! Grace is God moving to do for us what we do not deserve. It expressed itself in His showing mercy (kindness to the condemned). This resulted in peace (harmony) between God and men. But all this was based on truth.

Truth demanded God to punish the guilty. But truth also permitted justice to be tempered by mercy and grace. If God vacillated between truth and error, we would have no assurance. But since He does all according to truth, we can be absolutely assured of His faithfulness. Only in the realm of truth can one meet God and enjoy fellowship with Him. But those who are in truth can enjoy Him daily. How about you? Are you living in the realm of truth?

II. OBEDIENCE TO TRUTH, 4-6.

1. Practiced.—“**I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth. . .**” verse 4. What a joy to find believers walking in the truth of God, especially when an entire family does so. But what does it mean to “walk in the truth”? It is more than believing correct doctrines. It is obedience to God—a life and conduct guarded and directed by the principles of right revealed in Jesus Christ. No one walks in truth that lives contrary to Him.

It is not too much to expect people to practice obedience to truth. The “walk in truth” is the Christian walk. Jesus prayed, “**Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth,**” John 17:17. Are you making a practice of walking in the truth?

2. Commanded.—“**. . . walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father,**” verse 4. The way to walk in truth is to obey the Father. God's truth and commandments are revealed in His written Word, the Holy Bible. This will make sure one's walk is straight, steady, with a purpose, and in the right direction.

The walk in truth works no hardship: “**. . . his commandments are not grievous,**” I John 5:3. Since obedience is motivated by love, it keeps the burden from being oppressive; it brings rejoicing not regret.

3. Enjoyed.—To walk in obedience to the truth necessitates a walk in love, verses 5-6. Love and truth cannot be separated in Christian obedience. Heart attitude is as important as bodily actions. Only as one is motivated by love to God and men will he find fortitude to stay in the path of truth. Living thus in love, one enjoys the life of truth.

The believer does not feel unduly restrained in living according to the dictates of truth. His life may seem to be without “fun” to an unbeliever. But he who knows Jesus Christ personally and lives in His will really knows joy in living. Yes, the will of God can be enjoyed.

III. OPPONENTS OF TRUTH, 7-13.

Many people do not live according to truth. And many of these not only ignore it, but also oppose it. Verses 7-11 deal with these opponents to truth.

1. Many.—“**For many deceivers are entered into the world. . .**” verse 7. It is true to say “many” are opposed to the truth? Yes. Even a casual look at the world demonstrates this. Christians (including all denominations) are a minority of the total world population.

Whence do these opponents to the truth arise? (1) Some are

uninformed. They have never known the truth and so oppose it because of the blindness of their hearts. (2) Others profess Christ but have no real relationship with Him. They turn from the way as “false brethren,” Galatians 2:4-5. (3) Occasionally a true believer, who is weak in the faith, is led away into error by deceivers and hence unwittingly opposes the way of truth.

Believers must be set to oppose the opponents of the truth. Such opposition must be through a positive presentation of the gospel and a teaching in love of the doctrines which God has revealed.

2. Doctrine.—The point at which Satan most commonly attacks the truth revealed in Jesus Christ is at the point of the incarnation and deity of Jesus. Thus he strikes at the very heart of the Christian faith. Under the otherwise respectable term of “liberal theologian” many are denying the very Lord Jesus who provided for their salvation. By learned (?) questions they keep many from faith in Jesus and cause many others to stumble. The Apostle John says such teachers are motivated by “a deceiver and an antichrist,” verse 7. First John 4:1-4 states that every spirit who confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God while he who denies this truth is a spirit of antichrist. Thus we may distinguish between truth and error.

3. Unity.—Error takes many forms. It may be in doctrine, in conduct, in spirit. But it is error all the same. John is careful to point out that all error, whatever form it takes, is of “the deceiver and the antichrist.” All error has its head in the same power—Satan. Take care at this point! When you are faced with opponents to the truth, know the source from which they come and shun them. They may appear varied but they are all of one.

4. Danger.—Error is dangerous. John warns that to fall into error is to “lose those things which we have wrought” and fail to receive a “full reward.” This is what deceivers have to offer you—loss.

What is it in danger of being lost? Well, not one’s personal salvation of course. But there is a danger of loss of rewards for faithful service. Ensnared by false doctrine, a believer will cease to live for Jesus and so miss His “Well done” at the end of the way. No designing man of evil should be permitted so to harm a believer in Christ. We must live so close to God and His Word that we will be able, to “discern the spirits.” This is serious business. Opponents of the truth are dangerous.

5. Identifiable.—How can the opponents to the truth be identified? Verse, 9 answers, “By observing whether one abides in the doctrine of Christ you can know whether he is of God.” Read that verse!

Remember that there is nothing “new” which goes beyond the truth which God has revealed in Jesus Christ and recorded in the Holy Bible. Anything inconsistent with that revelation is of Satan. Use this as the

guideline and you will not be overcome with error. **“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them,”** Isaiah 8:20.

6. Rejected.—What should be one's attitude toward another who does not hold to the truth? John admonishes, “If anyone comes to teach you, and he doesn't believe what Christ taught, don't even invite him into your home. Don't encourage him in any way. If you do, you will be a partner with him in his wickedness.” (Paraphrase of verses 10-11.)

Believers should listen only to true doctrines. If someone tries to teach another doctrine the believer is to take a firm stand for the truth. Don't listen to other explanations of doctrines. Don't receive literature from the sects. Don't encourage the false witness to approach others by bidding him God's blessings.

To be for Jesus Christ is to be against Satan. To be for truth is to be against error. The Bible admonishes us concerning those who are in error to “avoid them” (Romans 16:17), to “withdraw yourselves” from their company (II Thessalonians 3:6), and “from such turn away” (II Timothy 3:5). Have nothing to do with those who hold not to truth as God has revealed it in Jesus Christ.

7. Resisted.—The Bible says that evil men and seducers will grow more and more numerous and increasingly bold and insistent as the end draws near. This calls for believers to be the more set for the defense of the Gospel, II Timothy 3:13-17; Jude 3.

New doctrines may sound enticing, learned and reasonable. They may appear to make old doctrines of God's Word seem out-moded and useless. But they blast the spiritual life, shipwreck one's faith, and leave a man without hope. Christians must resist them and stand fast in the faith.

How can an average believer defend the truth against error? Consider these suggestions. (1) Love Jesus above all else and saturate your heart and mind in truths concerning Him. (2) Carefully instruct your family in the truth. (3) Encourage people to enroll under the instruction in truth offered in your church. (4) Give no sort of aid or encouragement to anyone who does not accept the truth. (5) Give a loving and fervent witness for the Lord Jesus at every opportunity. (6) Purchase and spread gospel tracts and other literature which are true to the truth. (7) Support the visitation and witnessing ministry of your local church as well as the witness around the world in missionary evangelism. (8) Whatever else befalls be sure you are “set for the defense of the gospel,” Philippians. 1:17.

CONCLUSION — Here is a call to Christian commitment. Know the

truth. Love the truth. Propagate the truth. Defend the truth. That is enough to keep each believer busy for a lifetime! **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear,”**

I Peter 3:15.

QUESTIONS

1. What is truth?
2. What is love?
3. How are truth and love related?
4. How can one enjoy walking in truth?
5. Who is opposed to the truth?
6. What doctrine is commonly attacked by these opponents?
7. How can one identify false teachers?
8. What should be your attitude toward them?
9. How can you defend truth against error?
10. How has this study profited you personally?