

Lesson 1 – 1 November 2009

"Walking in Truth"

Lesson Scope: 2 John

Lesson Focus

The author of this epistle refers to himself as "the elder." Traditionally, he is identified as the apostle John. The similarity of the endearing, fatherly tones in 2 John to those of 1 and 3 John is obvious. At the time of his writing, the apostle John was possibly the only living apostle.

He addressed the letter to "the elect lady and her children ... for the truth's sake. Perhaps he was writing to a specific person, but his teaching can also be applied to the elect of God, the church. He includes a commendation for her faithfulness. He did not write to teach new truth, but to warn her of the threat that false teachers posed.

The same threat is real to us. Standing today does not guarantee ultimate victory. Our daily choices and responses to circumstances indicate our faithfulness presently and our destiny eternally.

Truth stands eternally unchanging. Only those who faithfully walk in the truth and carefully avoid evil associations will "receive a full reward."

Truth is the core of this lesson. God is truth just as He is light and love. Where there is divine love, there is truth, and vice versa. It shows how that practical, daily Christianity is an outworking of God's truth and love experienced personally in the believer's life. The resources are available to each one to consistently walk in truth. Truth is the only cause that deserves our untiring commitment. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Lesson Aim: To see essentials for continuing in the truth.

Theme Verse

2 John 8. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

Lesson Text.

“Stability in Truth”

2 John 1:1-6

The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; ²For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever. ³Grace be with you, mercy, *and* peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. ⁴I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. ⁵And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. ⁶And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

“Defense of Truth”

2 John 1:7-13

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. ⁸Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. ⁹Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: ¹¹For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. ¹²Having many things to write unto you, I would not *write* with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. ¹³The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

Questions for Study

Stability in Truth

1. What are the evidences that the elect lady, her children, and John were grounded in truth?"
2. How can truth dwell in us?
3. List some involvements of walking in truth.

4. What are some practical expressions of brotherly love?

Defense of Truth

5. What traits identify deceivers?

6. Explain the warning "Look to yourselves."

7. How does fellowship contribute to continuing in the truth?

Analyzing the Passage

Truth is a key word in this epistle, occurring five times in the first four verses. Truth creates a spiritual bond among those who love it. To write for "the truth's sake" expresses a commitment to the cause. "Truth and love" are the defining qualities of the Christian faith. The expression "walking in truth" depicts a competent, consistent application of truth to life.

The *deceivers* (v. 7) that John was especially warning against were the Gnostics, who denied Christ's incarnation. To reject His perfect humanity and His deity is to destroy the heart of Christianity (1 John 4:2-3). The apostle urged his readers to be alert to deception (v. 8), lest they lose their eternal reward and lie lose the joy of their presence in heaven (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

To "bid ... God speed" (v. 10) is to wish the Lord's blessing on another. To express harmony and to extend God's blessing to the false teachers is to partake of their evil deeds.

Principles and Applications

Stability in Truth

1. *Truth dwelling in us enables us to continue in truth* (vv.1 & 2). Jesus said, "I am ... the truth." To know Jesus is to know truth. To know truth is to know freedom (John 8:32). A vibrant, personal relationship with Jesus allows truth to pervade our life, freeing us from the bondage of sin.

2. *The eternal nature of truth inspires us to continue in it* (v. 2). Truth is as timeless as its source—God. Its cause deserves our absolute commitment. Its adherents are blessed with quality of life now and the promise of eternal reward.

3. *We must depend on the Lord's provisions to continue in truth* (v. 3). Alone, we are vulnerable to many deceivers. God gives to us His unmerited favor, His grace provides us with power, and His peace permits us to enjoy rest and satisfaction in our walk.

4. *The zeal with which we perpetuate the faith is proportionate to our de-*

sire to continue in the truth (v. 4). We think about and readily talk about the things that interest us most. Are we diligently teaching our children and demonstrating before them the ways of godliness? Do our neighbors find out that Christ is the joy of our hearts?

5. *Continuing in truth involves practical commitment to the Bible way of life.* (vv. 4-6). Expressing our love indicates our commitment. Are we reaching out in concern and encouragement to others'? How strong is our love for a Scriptural brotherhood'? Victorious Christian living is displayed by walking in truth.

6. *Brotherly love is essential for continuing in truth* (v.5). God loves all people; His love in us reaches out to others, especially our spiritual brothers and sisters. Love to our fellowmen proves that we walk in truth (1 John 3:16-18). This is a two-way street in church life, our love reaches out to help others and we gladly accept the help and correction that the brotherhood offers us.

Defense of Truth

7. *Rejection of false doctrine and loyalty to the doctrine of Christ are essential for continuing in the truth* (vv. 7-11). It is imperative that we teach clearly and frequently the basic doctrine of salvation and practical Christian living. We also need clear teaching against the errors of Calvinism, pietism, and casual Christianity. These influences can subtly affect us through the reference materials we use. Fellowship lines need to be drawn at safe places. We need to carefully promote the consistent Anabaptist–Mennonite understandings of truth that we have been taught.

8. *Honestly and carefully evaluating our relationship with Christ helps us maintain our position in the truth* (v. 8). Our natural tendency is to cool off spiritually. Besides that danger, seducers are becoming, worse and worse (2 Timothy 3:13). Diligence is essential for maintaining a healthy relationship with our Lord. Our counsel and preparatory services before Communion should be special times of self-examination. The Lord will abundantly reward those who are perpetually watchful.

9. *Fellowship with other faithful believers is essential for continuing in the truth* (vv. 12-13). We need the discernment of the brotherhood to keep our values and priorities straight. Others' faithfulness inspires our own faith and diligence. Brotherhood allows us to grow in our understanding and practice of truth.

Important Teachings

1. Truth dwelling in us enables us to continue in truth (vv. 1, 2).
2. The eternal nature of truth inspires us to continue in it (v. 2).
3. We must depend on the Lord's provisions to continue in truth (v. 3).
4. The zeal with which we perpetuate the faith is proportionate to our desire to continue in the truth (v. 4).
5. Continuing in truth involves practical commitment to the Bible way of life (vv. 4-6).
6. Brotherly love is essential for continuing in truth (v. 5).
7. Rejection of false doctrine and loyalty to the doctrine of Christ are essential for continuing in the truth (vv. 7-11).
8. Honestly and carefully evaluating our relationship with Christ helps us maintain our position in the truth (v. 8).
9. Fellowship with other faithful believers is essential for continuing in the truth (vv. 12, 13).

Answers to Questions

1. *What are the evidences that the elect lady, her children, and John were grounded in truth?*

They knew the truth (v. 1); it was dwelling in their consciousness (v. 2), giving them assurance. They were ordering their lives by truth (v. 4).

2. *How can truth dwell in us?*

We must acknowledge Jesus as our ultimate source of truth. Jesus said, "I am ... the truth" (John 14:6). Truth dwells in those who hear God (John 8:47) and apply truth to their lives.

3. *List some involvements of walking in truth.*

Those who walk in truth feel a close relationship with the brotherhood. We will perpetuate truth by teaching it to our children and speaking of it to the unsaved. It includes denying self, taking up the cross, and following Christ. To walk in truth is to apply its principles to all of life.

4. *What are some practical expressions of brotherly love?*

We need to show a genuine interest in our brethren's affairs and be committed enough to help them through their struggles. Give them the benefit of the doubt and refuse to be insulted when they disagree with us. Approach them humbly with rebuke if we notice failure. Lift them regularly to God in prayer.

5. *What traits identify deceivers?*

They deny the deity of Christ (v. 7). They live in transgression rather than by Christ's doctrine (v. 9).

6. *Explain the warning "Look to "yourselves"*

To begin walking in the truth is not equivalent to faithfully completing our walk. Because failure for us is a possibility, we frequently analyze our life in the light of truth to keep ourselves on course. This is not only a personal but also a group responsibility.

7. *How does fellowship contribute to continuing in the truth?*

Being careless in drawing fellowship lines will weaken our convictions and practice, but fellowship with a spiritual brotherhood will strengthen us. With spiritual brethren we can share our struggles and victories, as well as discuss issues that the church is facing. Fellowship enables us to keep a balanced perspective.

Summarizing the Lesson

The evil one continually attacks the way of truth although it is eternal and invincible. God has given us the resources we need to continue in truth. The choice is up to us—will we defend truth or deny it? Those who continue in truth are assured of receiving "a full reward"

Research Guide

1. Read what Jesus taught about truth in John 8:30-59.
2. Compare 2 John with 3 John. Notice that God's light, love, and life taught in 1 John equip us to walk in truth as encouraged in 2 John. Third John shows us the part that the brethren play in a victorious walk.