



“The All-Consuming Truth”

2 John 1-4

Theme: Spiritual vitality relies upon the grace of God keeping us committed to the truth.

Introduction: The essential message in this most brief book (only 245 words in the Greek text) is that although we are to love one another, we cannot compromise the truth in the name of love. Apparently, the recipient of this letter was a godly woman who naively extended Christian hospitality to false teachers. John was appalled that true believers would “participate” in the furthering of deception by greeting, encouraging, hosting, and fellowshiping with false teachers as if they were believers. Although John reiterates the propriety of genuine Christian hospitality as a form of true love, he calls upon “false fellowship” to stop by means of this letter.

As a general theme, the existence of absolute, divine truth is promoted as central to the life of the Church generally, and of the believer individually. “The Bible, the Word of truth (Ps. 119:160; *John 17:17*; 2 Cor. 6:7; 2 Tim. 2:15; James 1:18), majors on the theme of truth. God is the “God of truth” (*Ps. 31:5*; Isa. 65:16), who abounds in truth (*Ex. 34:6*) and always speaks the truth (*2 Sam. 7:28*; cf. Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2); Christ is the truth (*John 14:6*; Eph. 4:21), is full of truth (*John 1:14*), revealed the truth (*John 1:17*), spoke the truth (*John 8:45–46*), and testified to the truth (*John 18:37*); the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (*John 14:17*; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 5:6). God’s truth is eternal (*Ps. 117:2*), infinite (Pss. 57:10; 86:15; *108:4*), and saving (*Ps. 69:13*). Salvation comes from faith in the truth (*2 Thess. 2:13*; cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25); believers are sanctified by the truth (*John 17:17*), love the truth (cf. *2 Thess. 2:10*), are set free by the truth (*John 8:32*), worship in the truth (*John 4:23–24*), rejoice in the truth (*1 Cor. 13:6*), speak the truth (*Eph. 4:15, 25*), meditate on the truth (*Phil. 4:8*), manifest the truth (*2 Cor. 4:2*), obey the truth (*1 Peter 1:22*), are guided by the truth (*Pss. 25:5*; 43:3) and, most comprehensively, walk in the truth (*1 Kings 2:4*; 3:6; 2 Kings 20:3; Pss. 26:3; 86:11).”¹

In contrast to the truth, Satan is called the “father of lies” (John 8:44) and he does all he can to blind the world he rules from seeing the truth. As a result,

¹ John MacArthur, *1, 2, 3 John*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007), 214.

The Epistle of 1 John

unbelievers are “men of depraved minds and deprived of the truth” (1 Timothy 6:5) who “oppose the truth” (2 Timothy 3:8), and “turn away their ears from the truth” (2 Timothy 4:4).

Hence, John in this short epistle, advocates for the truth and the importance that must be preserved. The battle between truth and falsehood has never been more fierce – assaulted by such things as post-modern relativity, fake news, and the normalization of delusions. The message of 2 John is critical for us to master and embrace.

I. The Common Affection for Truth – 1:1

A. IT INVOLVES BELIEVERS WITHOUT DISTINCTION

1. John begins his letter by referring to himself as “*the elder*” [πρεσβύτερος] – a reference to his authority in the church as the last surviving member of the “twelve.”
2. He addressed this letter to “*the chosen lady*” – an unnamed woman (not merely an allegorical reference to the church) who was most likely a widow since her husband was not mentioned, but her children are.
 - a) “*lady*” [κυρία] – is a feminine form of “lord” – an emphasis that this woman was of special status or authority.
 - b) “*chosen*” [ἐκλεκτός] – could mean either “elect” in the soteriological sense; but, likely simply marks her as “distinguished” or a woman of “excellence” – cp. Romans 16:13 (the only other time this term is used of an individual).
3. John also addressed the letter to “*her children*” – a reference to the woman’s literally offspring who were old enough to benefit from the content of the letter and who were walking with the Lord – cp. v. 4.
4. He then states “*whom I love in truth*” – a plural reference to his affection for both the lady and her children – the spiritual devotion to them in light of the truth that John, the lady, and her children all embrace.

The Epistle of 1 John

5. He provides evidence here that there is no distinction between an apostle or elder, parent, or child – that there is equality among those who are saved as brother & sisters regardless of maturity, stature, or position.

B. IT INCLUDES BELIEVERS WITHOUT EXCEPTION

1. John goes even further and extends this relationship of affection “in truth” to all who are genuinely born again – “... *and not only I, but also all who know the truth.*”

2. This common knowledge of the truth and the belief in the One who is the “*truth*” that unites all believers in the affection for one another.

3. John is here demonstrating that within the body of Christ – whether we know the specific individual or not, we love those who are one with Christ.

4. We have an immediate affinity for those who are believers because we are united by the truth – cp. *John 17:19-21*.

5. This is an important emphasis in light of the correction that John is preparing to give to this woman – reiterating the propriety of showing love for one another; but, that affection must be reserved for those who are truly in Christ Jesus and not indiscriminately shared with deceivers, false teachers, and those working in the spirit of antichrist – cp. *v. 7*.

II. The Common Abiding in Truth – 1:2

A. THE CONCERN FOR THE TRUTH

1. John declares that he is writing “*for the sake of the truth ...*” – an expression that resembles the motivation of Jude – *Jude 3*

2. As mentioned earlier, John’s concern was that the actions of this “lady,” if replicated by her or regularly by others, would compromise the truth in the name of hospitality.

The Epistle of 1 John

3. Believers are charged with the responsibility to express love through hospitality – cp. *Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 3:2*; but they cannot do so apart from a staunch commitment to the truth of God’s Word.
4. When a person denies the truth of the Gospel – any of the fundamentals of the faith – they cannot be embraced as a genuine brother and extended the same status in love as someone who is “in the truth.”

B. THE CONSTANCY OF THE TRUTH

1. John, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, then states that this *“truth ... abides in us and will be with us forever”*
2. This causes us to recall the promise by the Lord concerning the Holy Spirit – cp. *John 14:17*
3. This emphasizes that the unity that we enjoy in the truth is a result of the Spirit of Truth – who guides us into truth, and promotes the person of the Lord Jesus Christ – cp. *John 15:26*
4. The Spirit will *“be with us forever”* – as the one who is constantly giving to us the mind of Christ – *1 Corinthians 2:14-16*.
5. As such, the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ does not change – it is forever settled and must be diligently preserved, protected, prioritized, and proclaimed!

III. The Common Achievement of Truth – *1:3*

A. THE BENEFITS OF THE TRUTH

1. John provides a prayer, of sorts, on the basis of truth – three things that are inextricably connected to the truth and that will result from the full embrace of the truth in the lives of saints.

The Epistle of 1 John

2. Immediately previous to this verse, John had declared that the truth “abides in us and will be with us forever” and states that *“grace, mercy, and peace will be with us ...”*
3. God’s *“grace”* [χάρις] - is the initiator in the plan to redeem – as we are saved by grace through faith – cp. *Ephesians 2:8*
4. God’s *“mercy”* [ἔλεος] - results from grace as the truth of the work of Christ is embraced – God’s compassion extending to those who are viewed by Him as both helpless and hopeless – cp. *Ephesians 2:4*
5. The result of both of these is *“peace”* [εἰρήνη] both with God and the consequential peace of God that keeps and guards us in a state of reconciliation with God – *Ephesians 2:14*.

B. THE BENEFACTORS OF THE TRUTH

1. All of these blessings resulting from the truth come *“... from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father ...”*
2. When truth abides in us, these things flow from the source of all good things.
3. We are told that these things come equally from *“... the Father”* and from *“Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father”* – emphasizing the equality of the *“the Father ... and ... the Son,”* as a summary refutation of the false teaching by the heretics being hosted by the “chosen lady.”
4. Thus, John refers to the equality of *“truth and love”* in the same way – that one cannot be prioritized over the other.

IV. The Common Affirmation of Truth – 1:4

A. THE EXAMPLE OF WALKING IN THE TRUTH

1. John rejoices in the impact that truth had had in the lives of the children of this “chosen lady” – *“I was very glad to find some of*

The Epistle of 1 John

your children walking in truth ...”

2. These “*children*” of the “lady” were examples of people who have been transformed in the midst of an environment hostile to the truth – but they were “*walking in truth.*”
3. That he mentions “*some*” - ought not to throw us off – John was only referring to those he had personally heard about or seen within his own experience.
4. “*glad*” [χαίρω] is the word for rejoicing or “being in a state of happiness” which is followed by “*very*” [λίαν] – an adverb meaning “exceedingly” - describing the degree of gladness he knew was intense.
5. “*walking*” [περιπατέω] is a metaphor describing the way that their character is demonstrated in their conduct.
6. John’s point is that the faith of her children was being displayed in the way that they lived – a consistency that enabled the truth to be placed on display.

B. THE EXPECTATION OF WALKING IN THE TRUTH

1. This is the very expectation of God – “... *just as we have received commandment to do from the Father.*”
2. Obedience to the truth is not rare among believers, it is the norm – the expected result of believing the truth.
3. The expectation of God is that believers will follow Jesus Christ and do everything that He has commanded – cp. *Matthew 28:20*
4. One does not truly believe what he does not practice – a profession of faith turns into a confession of faith when obedience to what is believed follows one’s faith.