WALK IN THE TRUTH

2 John 1-13

Key Verse: 4

“It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.”

Thank God for the completion of our study of 1 John. In this epistle we thought of the fellowship with the Father and with his Son in chapter 1, Jesus Christ our advocate with the Father and the anointing from the Holy One amid the antichrists in chapter 2, being children of God in his lavishing love in chapter 3, the spirit of the antichrist and God’s love of sending his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins and his command of loving one another in chapter 4, and overcoming the world with faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the eternal life in him in chapter 5. And we cannot forget the final exhortation “keep yourselves to idols.” Particularly, God’s love of the atoning sacrifice and his command of love be deep in our hearts and so our fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ grow in our lives to be full of life and joy. We believe that this is the way to overcome the spirit of the antichrist and the world, which is under the control of the evil one.

As the last living apostle he wrote all three of these about 90 to 95 A.D, at the end of that first century while he was in the ministry at Ephesus, and just after that he received the Revelation in the year 96.

In 1 John we thought of love a lot, learning that God is love to the point of sending his Son as an atoning sacrifice, love comes from God, his love is perfect love and he first loved us, so we also ought to love one another. In 2 and 3 John we find a specific expression, “love in the truth.” It is a whole idea of the Bible that love and truth cannot be separated. God is love and he is a God of truth (Dt 32:4 in KJV). Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:6 “Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth”, and in Ephesus 4:15, “…speaking the truth in love.” However, the expression “Love in truth” is particularly found here in 2 and 3 John, in the very first verse of 2 John and 3 John as written, “whom I love in the truth.” We can say that love is bound by the truth. In 2 and 3 John Apostle John leads us more to the realm of the truth. God is the God of truth (Dt. 32:4; Isa 65:16); Jesus is the truth (Jn 14:6); the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of the truth (Jn 14:17; 1526; 16:13), and the Bible is called the Scripture/Book of the truth (Da 10:21).

In 1 John he provided doctrinal tests and behavioral tests by which we could evaluate the truth. He has written the letter to all in general (it is, in that sense, a general epistle). He now writes these two shortest letters in the New Testament to one lady and one man. The reason for writing and calling people to live in the truth is because of the ever-present threat of false teachers, You might say, “Well, if he was worried about false teachers, why didn’t he send the letter to the church? Why does he write a letter to a lady and a letter to a man and warn them about false teachers and call them to the truth?” The issue behind the letters is discernment to protect the truth, even down to the personal level. It is an indication that God does not want even one believer or one family exposed to falsity. The influence of error in that one family can be spread like gangrene, as Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:17. It is very important to protect our mind and home and the community of God.

let’s study 2 John. Verses 1 says, “The elder, to the chosen lady…” The word lady is an interesting word. It is in Greek *kuria*, which is the feminine form of *kurios*, meaning Lord. Lord and lady are related. The lord had some kind of sovereign power. The lady was his feminine counterpart. The lady had a certain lordship over the home. She was the lady of the house. Women are to be those who wash strangers’ feet, who care for the home and care for children (1 Tim 5:10; Titus 2:4, 5)

**First, walking in the truth (1-6).** John says continually in verses 1 and 2, “The elder, to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth—and not I only, but also all who know the truth—because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever.” From the beginning of the epistle the term “the truth” is very much stressed written 3 times. It was the truth that bound John to her. It was the truth that bound John to her children. It was the truth that bound them all to each other. All who know the truth share the same spiritual life. Here we see that Christian community is connected by the truth. Our connection is in a body of the truth, the revealed truth. It is the truth that unites us; that is to say, all believers are linked together by a common knowledge of and belief in the truth. Apostle Paul says in 1 Timothy 3:15 that believers are God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church exists in the world to be the pillar and ground of the truth.” And if the church ever abandons the truth, then it ceases to be the church of Jesus Christ. Our affections, sympathies, care, compassion and concern for each other is experienced because we are tied together in the truth. The truth must always govern the exercise of love. We’re not only united by the truth, we’re indwelt by the truth.

Then John sends greetings in verse 3, “Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father’s Son will be with us in truth and love.” It seems to be saying, “ How much do we need grace, mercy, peace? Yet, we can receive grace for our sin, mercy for our miserty, and peace for our turmoil, only in truth and love that accompanies that truth.

Now John says in verse 4, “It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.” Walking in the truth is a very particular expression in 2 and 3 John. 3 John 4 also says, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” What does walking in the truth mean? Jesus said in John 12:35, “You are going to have the light just a little longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you.” In this case Jesus said this in the concept of light and darkness.” Here John says of the truth in contrast to lie or deception. The children of God are to walk in the truth in the world of lies and liars.

Jesus said in John 18:37 in his conversation with Pilate, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” At this Pilate responded, “What is the truth?” At this point Pilate knew what is the truth, but he responded cynically and skeptically. Jesus came as the king of truth. He once clearly said of himself, “I am the truth” in John 14:6. Jesus declared, “Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” Jesus said in John 8:31-32, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Jesus prayed for his disciples in John 17:17, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” It is the source of our salvation, it is the source of our unity, and it is our abiding confidence.

Let’s think about walking in the truth. We remember that Enock walked with God, and Noah also walked with God. Walking is our daily practice. We can say that Christian life is to walk in the truth. John says in 1 John 2:6, “Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.” It is to recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood and follow the Spirit of truth. It is to be controlled by the truth, moving around in the truth. The life of a Christian is defined by the truth. The truth is not just to be believed, it is a way of living.

To walk in the truth is certainly to do what is right. 1 John 2:29 says, “If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him” and 3:10 says, “…Anyone who does not do what is right, is no a child of God.”

Also, when we think of walking in the truth, we do not see the whole path, yet we walk in the truth step by step, being assured that it is paths of righteousness, as David confessed in Palm 23:3, “He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.” Also, we know that when we walk in the truth step by step, it will lead to the complete salvation and eternal life. So David confessed continually, “Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

There is a story of two sets of footprints in the sand in a man’s dream. At each scene in his life there were two sets of footprints, one of the Lord’s and the other of his. But at certain times, when he was in saddest and most trouble times, there was only one set of footprints. He asked the Lord, “Why only one set? When I needed you most, you would leave me, right?” Then the Lord answered, “No, never, during the times of trials and temptations. When you saw the one set of footprints, it was the time for me to carry you.” Though it was in one’s dream, I believe that the message of this story is true. We should never think that I am alone, left all by myself, even at a extremely difficult and unbearable time. Knowing this, what is true with the Lord, he wants us to walk in the truth.

Then John says in verses 5 and 6 say, “And now dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands.” Now John talks about love and walking in obedience to God’s commands. As we thought of, the whole point of God’s commands is to love God and love our neighbour. As we walk in obedience to God’s commands, it leads us to love God and love our neighbour. This is as John said in 1 John 5:2-3, “This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands.” Again, loving God and God’s children and obeying his commands are one set; they cannot be separated. It is quite true that love is to walk in obedience to God’s commands. Then John says continually in verse 6, “As you heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.” In other translations, “this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.” We see that walking in the truth, to walk in obedience to God’s commands, walking in love, all go together.

At this point we can think more about walking in love. As we studied in 1 John, John says in 3:12, “Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother.” Fallen men are all descendants of Cain. There is no love in the hearts of unrighteous sinners. All our righteous acts are like filthy rags (Isa 64:6). John wrote in 1 John 3:16, “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.” Truly love comes from God. In that truth that Jesus laid down his life for us sinners so that in him we might become the righteousness of God, and in that love, and in that command we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers, we can love one another crucifying our sinful nature at each time.

2 Thessalonians 2:10-11 says, “in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie.” Loving the truth and walking in the truth is the way to overcome a powerful delusion. Otherwise, all cannot but be swept away by the great delusion.

Here we hear God’s urging us to walk in the truth. God’s pleasure is that his children walk in the truth. We are to walk in the truth, particularly at the critical time in life. Sometimes the truth does not seem to be clear. But God promised in Deuteronomy 4:29, “But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.” Certainly, walking in the truth includes seeking the Lord whole heartedly. Jesus said in Matthew 11:25, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.” It shows how much we should be humble to walk in the truth, so that the truth may not be hidden but disclosed to us at each time. That’s why it is written 3 times in the Bible that “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (Prov 3:34; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). It is also the same with Micah 6:8, “..what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” May God help us to walk in the truth walking humbly with our God!

**Second, welcoming in the truth (7-13).** Verse 7 says, “Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.” Now John talks about deceivers contrasted to those who walk in the truth. Many deceivers have gone out into the world. World here simply means into the realm of human life. They go everywhere in the world where they can corrupt the gospel, everywhere they can pollute the church.

According to John deceivers do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. The greatest truth is Jesus Christ coming in the flesh. It means Jesus Christ is one person in human Jesus and divine Christ; he is God-man, the Son of God, who came in the flesh to be an atoning sacrifice for our sins, which is God’s love. Any such person who denies this is the deceiver and the antichrist. John also had mentioned in 1 John, “Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist—he denies the Father and the Son” (2:22). John also described in 4:2-3, “This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.”

Then John says in verse 8, “Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.” This is the reason we should run the race marked out for us to the end. We can think of its meaning further.

John says in verses 9, “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God…” Those who run ahead assume they have mastered the gospel’s teachings and are eager to try something new and different. So they do not continue in the teaching of Christ. In fact they have no God, no part with God whatsoever. The teaching of Christ encompasses both the teaching about the Christ and Christ’ own teaching, which are basically the same. But whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. Christian life is to walk in the truth, that is, also continuing in the teaching of Christ, the core of which Jesus Christ coming in the flesh, the gospel, the atoning death of Christ Jesus, the Son of God. About continuing the teaching of Christ John also said in 1 John 2:27, “As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.” Jesus also said in John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” This is also the reason Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:2, “By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.”

Then John says in verse 10, “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him.” In other translation, “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting.” Even don’t greet. John continues in verse 11, “Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.” What a strong warning! At that time there were many itinerant preachers visiting homes to preach the gospel. It was a good customary that believers welcomed them into their houses and listened to them. However, there were those who made us of this to deceive genuine believers. In this case whom to welcome really matters. I think one main of this epistle was the help the lady to have a discerning heart whom to welcome into her house so that she may not share the wicked work of the deceiving preachers. This lady might have actually opened her house to some false teachers out of great hospitality. But there is always something more important than hospitality. It is the truth. Even hospitality had to be practiced in the truth.

Nowadays there is no iterant preachers. We are living in an individualistic society. Still we invite people to our homes. We also living in an internet generation. Whom we contact through all kinds of means matters. We all need to be careful of our connections, through which the ultimate deceiver, the one, can work to infiltrate into a genuine believer’s mind or the community of God’s people to ruin the gospel faith. We are reminded of what Paul said in Galatians 1:7-8, “…Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach the gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!” As we though of, the gospel is only one, the gospel of Jesus Christ coming in the flesh, the gospel of his death and resurrection.

Then in verse 12 John says, “I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.” God wants us to go deeper and deeper in our fellowship and joy is one of important characteristics in our fellowship in Christ. What kind of joy is he talking about? The joy that is produced by knowing the truth. Joy is also one of the themes of the epistles of 1, 2, 3 John.

Then in verse 13, “The children of your chosen sister send their greetings.” The two chosen ones were beautiful sisters and so were their children. What an encouragement it must have been that the children of her chosen sister send the chosen lady greetings. There are chosen people of God who are to the people of the truth.

May God help us to walk in the truth and welcome in the truth!