

To the Elect Lady and Her Children – 2 John

Introduction – This short letter is written to a local church which is clearly in a crisis situation. Jesus had predicted that many false teachers would come in that generation (Matt 24:4-5, 11-12, 23-25, 34) and would deceive many. This is exactly what has happened in the church to whom John is writing (2 John 7). Applying much of what he had taught and warned in 1 John, he writes to assure them that they will experience God's favor in their lives, although they were struggling with antichrists, controversies, believers departing from them and the truth, and a lack of love by some.

To the Elect Lady and Her Children (vv1-3) – God thinks of us in terms of a single body and at the same time as a gathering of individuals. The “*elect lady*” is a single, local church that John is addressing. He writes from, as well as on behalf of, a sister church (v13). The church is the elect bride of Jesus (Eph 5:22-33), and the mother of her members (Gal 5:26), for the church (not an individual) holds the means of grace through which the Spirit operates. To be an evangelical and a Protestant is not supposed to be equal to being an individual Christian only. There is potency and protection in the church, not in a building, but in a formal gathering of covenanted members. The church is the Lady of the Lord's house, and her children are the members of the church.

Love in Truth – John's words are personal and strong here. As we will see, this church has been through a very difficult time. John emphasizes that his love is “*in truth*” along with all the others who have “*known the truth*.” This “love in truth” is assurance that will last forever. He does not simply greet them with “*grace, mercy, and peace*” but promises them that they will receive these “*from God the Father, and*”, to make clear against the false teachings of the antichrists, “*from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father*,” and in the same “*truth and love*.”

First Things First – Always (vv4-6) – We can get a sense of the tragedy that has occurred in this church. John rejoices that “*some of your children*” are walking in truth (v4), as opposed to “*many deceivers*” who have “*gone out into the world*” (v7). They are surely shaken, so John pleads with them to stay with the first things, with the old commandment to love one another (v5), that we keep His commandments (v6), and that we do so, “*walking in truth*” (v4).

Truth, Love, Obedience – The very things the heresies attacked were the very strongholds which had held the church firm and would rebuild and revive her. Unshakeable confession of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Unshakeable commitment to love one another. Unshakeable commitment to see faith working itself out in obedience. Not a new, fancy program. Not a slick new slogan. No bells and whistles to bring them in or keep them. Truth, Love, and Obedience: These were the foundations of the church that would take the world by storm (1 John 3:14). Their situation was much different than ours (as a local body), but their foundations of truth and power for community remain the same.

Love that Protects (vv7-11) – The entreaty to the Lady in vv4-6 is due to the dangerous activity of the many that have gone out from her. We know about these antichrists from 1 John 2:18-23; they are the ones who deny that Jesus is the Christ, or they deny that Jesus came in the flesh. We cannot choose between loving one another and being faithful to the truth. We need to do both in order to abide in Christ. Therefore, John warns them to “*Watch out*” (v8), and this warning needs to remain deep within us in a world (and some of the so-called church) that calls us “*intolerant*” or “*antiquated*” for insisting upon faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in order to be saved.

John grounds his strong warning on a careful evaluation of the extreme seriousness of the false teaching and its effects upon this congregation. Many have been deceived. They have “*transgressed*,” or more literally, “*run ahead*” of the doctrine of Christ (likely a claim of the heretics elitist, even emergent, attitude). These types of Gnostic, anti-atonement teachings are all around us today. They are not to be tolerated in the church.

Do Not Receive Them (vv10-11) – This is not teaching that we shouldn't invite pagans or false teachers into our personal homes in order to debate or witness to them. Remember, he is addressing “*the Lady*,” the church. Her home is the place of worship and teaching. They are not to be allowed a place for level debate or acceptable options teaching. They are not to be received as communing brothers and sisters, for they have rejected Christ and they are attempting to lead others astray. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. True love protects her children.

Walking in Truth, in Love, in Obedience – We need to think of these things as a corporate, single body, and then as children of the elect Lady as well. It is the season of Advent, and a Christ-less Christmas is all around us, even throughout the broader church. As children of our heavenly Father, let us remember that this is the way we honor our Mother, the Bride of our Lord Jesus Christ.