



2 John

A Verse-By-Verse Commentary

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THE BOOK OF 2 JOHN; AN INTRODUCTION.

The book of 2 John is the 63rd book of the Bible, and it is comprised of 1 chapter of 13 verses. A verse-per-day evaluation of 2 John will take less than two weeks to complete!

John is the Apostle John who was personally called by Jesus. Matthew 4:21, 22 reveals his formal calling by the Lord –

“Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.”

John is held to be the author of the Gospel of John; 1, 2, and 3 John; and the book of Revelation. He is highlighted in the gospels as being one of an inner circle who most closely associated with Jesus. This also included Peter and John’s brother, James. In the gospel which bears his name, he refers to himself as the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (for example, see John 13:23).

Based on the terminology of some verses in the gospels, it is speculated by some that John may actually be a first cousin of Jesus. However, this cannot be determined without a measure of speculation.

Like the book of 1 John, no writer is specifically identified as being the author of 2 John. Rather, only the title, “The Elder,” is given in the first verse. However, the obvious similarities in writing style give a strong hint that he is, in fact, the same author of both epistles.

The letter is addressed to “the elect lady and her children.” The meaning of that will be evaluated when that verse is analyzed.

The dating of the letter is reasonably assumed to be around the same time as for that of 2 John – from the mid-80s to the mid-90s.

The main theme of 2 John is “Abiding in the truth.” Thus, the main purpose of the epistle is “To warn believers about false teachers.”

The main presentation of Christ in the epistle is “Jesus Christ, the Truth.”

A short review of the book includes the following –

Author – The Apostle John

Date – Mid 80s to mid 90s

Theme – Abiding in the truth.

Purpose – To warn believers about false teachers.

Presentation of Christ – The Truth

A limited outline of the book would be –

The Book of 2 John – Knowing the Truth

Book Superstructure

* Truth – Knowing it.

Book Structure

* Personal letter.

Book Outline

* Walking in Christ and His commandments; rejecting deceivers.

Life application: We hope that you will spend the next 13 days of your life learning the book of 2 John, one verse at a time. From there, we hope you will apply its truths to your life, molding yourself more each day into being a faithful and wholehearted follower of Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

Lord God, may it be our great and burning desire to be faithful in studying Your word each day. May we accept its truths as they are revealed to us, keeping them in proper context. And, may we then apply those truths to our walk before You. May we, each day of our lives, pursue Jesus Christ who is our Life, Light, and Truth. Be with us as we pursue the knowledge of Your Son, our Lord and Savior, who is so clearly presented in Your precious word. To Your glory we pray. Amen.

The Elder,

To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, 2 John -1

The letter of 2 John does not bear a name to identify the author. Rather, the contents themselves make it clear that John is, in fact, the one who is penning the letter. Understanding this, he begins with words to identify himself to his audience, saying, “The Elder.” Here, he uses the word *presbuteros*, signifying an older person, or a person of seasoned judgment, as through experience. It is where the modern denomination Presbyterian comes from, signifying leadership by a body of seasoned and experienced men.

By the time this was written, John was more than likely the only surviving apostle. Calling himself the elder indicated both his age and his position. No other name would be needed as his identity would be well understood. From there, he then opens this letter “To the elect lady.”

Despite seeming to be a simple addressee to identify, it is actually an impossible thing to do so without something further to go on. The Greek words are *eklektē kyria*. Some take this as a particular lady, being addressed by name. However, even that becomes complicated. Is it a Greek woman, “*the* elect Kyria” (the Greek word for “lady” is *kuria* and was a common name at the time, like Sarah today); is it a Babylonian woman, “Electa *the* lady;” or is it a compound name, “Electa Kyria?” Some argue that this cannot be a proper name because the letter will later (verse 13) speak of “The children of your elect sister,” thus identifying it as a body of believers.

Further, John will begin to speak in the plural to the addressee in just a few verses. For example, verse 8 says, “Look to yourselves.” For this reason, it is then thought that it is a body of believers. Indeed, such changes in the pronouns are found elsewhere. When Moses addresses Israel in Deuteronomy, he switches between the singular and the plural quite often.

Due to this, it is then believed that the “elect lady” is a particular church body, and John is changing the pronouns in order to make points concerning individual or group issues. One reason for the unusual address – whether an individual or a body – could be to protect the identity of the believers from persecution. In writing it this way, it would be

vague enough that nobody could clearly say, “We will get that person,” or “We will close down that church.”

In the end, the answer to this is debated over, but being dogmatic, without some type of further evidence, is not a sound approach. Rather, giving the options and allowing them to be considered by each individual will expand the understanding of the nuances for all who are so instructed.

John next adds in “and her children.” If an individual, it would be the actual children of the lady. Albert Barnes notes, “The word here rendered ‘children’ (τέκνοις teknois) would include in itself both sons and daughters, but since the apostle immediately uses a masculine pronoun, τοῖς τοῖς it would seem more probable that sons only were intended.” However, even if daughters are included, it is certain that some children were sons. The Greek masculine will then cover both sexes.

If the elect lady is a body of believers, then the children are the parishioners. Again, the use of the masculine Greek would indicate males and possibly females as well. It could even be that the letter is an encyclical, and it is addressing each church that will receive the letter in this manner. Thus, it could be a reference to all true churches (and then, by implication, all churches to this day – because it is included in the Bible).

John next says of his addressee, “whom I love in truth.” Some versions say, “whom I love in the truth.” The inclusion of a definite article here is inappropriate. The Greek reads, “whom I love in truth.” By adding an article, it makes the love conditional based on the circumstances concerning “the truth.” No such thought is hinted at. Rather, John loves his addressee “in truth” and without conditions. They are believers, and his love extends to them, unconditionally, in that sphere. This is reflected, for example, in 1 John 3:18 –

“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

From there, he says, “and not only I.” These words indicate that the sphere of love, meaning “in truth,” is not limited to him alone. This does not help indicate who the addressee actually is. It still could be a single lady and her children or a church of believers. However, it is a word of comfort and assurance for either if they are isolated, small, persecuted, or so on. It is not simply John who loves them in truth, “but also all those who have known the truth.”

As this is a perfect participle, it should say something like, “having known,” or “have come to know.” It isn’t something they merely knew in the past, but it is complete and ongoing. All who are in Christ are included. The love in truth extends far beyond the ink of John’s pen to all believers. It is a note of great comfort to the elect lady and her children.

Life application: Whether a church and its congregants, or a lady and her children, John loved them personally and they were loved within the entire scope of the greater church. Because what he says in the letter could be addressed to a church group or a family as well, a broader picture of what is being said, without a final determination as to the addressee, is the better choice.

Concerning the other believers that John includes in the letter, meaning “those who have known the truth,” John states it in such a way as to refer to those who have personal knowledge and acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. It is an attitude we today should continue to display as we deal with other believers in other bodies.

For now, we are in a new book, and in an exciting new adventure! Of the five books written by the Apostle John (John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation), this is the shortest of them all – containing only 13 verses and, hence, only 13 days to revel in it. Let us endeavor to do so!

Lord God, we look forward with anticipation to each new book of Your word, and to all the wonderful insights that You reveal to us in them. Thank You for having preserved Your precious word for us so that we can peer into Your heart, and into the intent You have for us by including them in Your Holy Bible. Amen.

...because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: 2 John -2

In this verse, John gives the reason for his statements made in verse 1. These statements were that 1) he loves the elect lady and her children, and 2) all those who have known the truth also love her. He now completes that thought with, “because of the truth which abides in us.”

In other words, this isn't because of some magnetic personality that makes everyone fawn over her, but because truth resides in her, and indeed in all believers. The word "abides" is a present participle. Right now, not at some unknown point in the future, the truth resides in us. As the Greek more literally reads, "because of the truth, the abiding in us."

It isn't that the truth is out there, and we can seek it out when needed. It isn't that it is available to us when times get tough. It is a truth which we possess, and it has taken up residence in us. This is a concept confirmed by Paul's statement in Ephesians 1:13, 14 –

"In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."

The word of truth is the gospel message. When that word of truth is accepted, the Holy Spirit –the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:19)/the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17) – abides in us once and forever. Paul states this is a "guarantee of our inheritance," and John next says in this verse that this truth "will be with us forever."

Of this, the words "with us" are in the emphatic position – "and with us that shall be." The verb is future indicative. It shall be; it is a certainty. In other words, and as has been consistently revealed in Scripture, we have the doctrine of eternal salvation. John makes no qualifiers and he states no other conditions. He simply puts forth his words as a definite and certain proposition. The truth is in us, and with us it shall be "forever." The term in Greek translated as "forever" is literally "to the age." It is a way of saying that this state will continue on, unabated, for all time.

Life application: Paul's word consistently proclaims eternal salvation for the believer. John's words do the same. And their words simply reflect what Jesus taught concerning those who come to Him. Salvation is a gift, it is given with a promise and guarantee, and it is forever. What part of that process is so hard for people to accept and then proclaim?

Instead, the term “Once Saved Always Saved” is tossed out by doctrinally unsound teachers as if it is a heretical proclamation. And yet, it is exactly what Jesus and the apostles consistently proclaim.

If you are in a Methodist Church, Church of God, or some other denomination which bases its teachings on the doctrine of Jacob Arminius, you are being led by people trained in a theology which says that you can lose your salvation. But the Bible teaches otherwise.

If God, who knows the end from the beginning, seals you with His Holy Spirit (as a guarantee) and then removes it, it would show that God has erred; an impossibility. Therefore, such doctrine is not only unsound; it is contrary to both reason and the surety of God’s word.

Talk to your pastor about these things. Find out where his doctrine is failing, and courteously ask him to consider his stand. Pray that he will see reason and come to stand on the purity of the gospel which teaches eternal salvation – despite ourselves. If he is unwilling to accept the truth of God’s word, it is probably time for you to find another church.

Oh God, one thing we know for certain is that You are perfectly truthful and that what You do can never be thwarted by man or devil. Rather, Your decisions are eternal and they carry the weight and authority of the Creator of all things. Because we know this, we know that we can never be taken from Your strong grasp once we have called out to You through Jesus. In Him, we are saved, saved, saved! Hallelujah, we are saved! Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. 2 John -3

John has just opened the letter by noting his addressee. Along with that, he has explained the circumstances of the love which is conveyed with the letter. It is “because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever.” Only now, with that understood, he gives his main salutation. In this, he includes points of doctrine which are as substantial as the greeting itself. He begins with, “Grace, mercy, and peace *will* be with you.”

So far, John follows a format used in letters throughout the ages – identify yourself, acknowledge the recipient, and then provide a greeting before engaging in the content of the letter. This verse is the main greeting. However, unlike most greetings which state a wish (such as “I hope and pray you will be blessed”), he uses a prediction in the future tense for those he is addressing.

The verb is in the future tense, “will be.” This is the assurance we have in Christ, and it is therefore something we can all use in our future letters, never fearing that anything less will be the result in the lives of the saved believers we correspond with. And what is it that will be with us? Three things are identified –

- 1) Grace. It is the Greek word *charis*. It is unmerited favor. The word gives the sense of leaning toward another in order to share a benefit. One can think of inclining toward a person in favor, or to endow a blessing. The word is normally used concerning the Lord’s favor, as it is here.

- 2) Mercy – The Greek is *eleos*. It gives the sense of covenant loyalty, and thus, compassion. It is the compassion of God which provides both clemency from sin and eternal life in place of condemnation. The word is used 27 times in the New Testament, and yet, this is the only time it is seen in all of John’s writings. Further, this is its last use in Scripture. Understanding this word, in connection with grace, is actually rather important. And so, it is good to cite Vincent’s Word Studies explanation of it here. Though long, the explanation is most beneficial –

“Mercy is kindness and goodwill toward the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them. Trench observes: ‘In the Divine mind, and in the order of our salvation as conceived therein, the mercy precedes the grace. God so loved the world with a pitying love (herein was the mercy), that He gave His only-begotten Son (herein the grace), that the world through Him might be saved. But in the order of the manifestation of God’s purposes of salvation, the grace must go before the mercy and make way for it. It is true that the same persons are the subjects of both, being at once the guilty and the miserable; yet the righteousness of God, which it is quite as necessary should be maintained as His

love, demands that the guilt should be done away before the misery can be assuaged; only the forgiven may be blessed. He must pardon before He can heal.... From this it follows that in each of the apostolic salutations where these words occur, grace precedes mercy.”

- 3) Peace. It is the Greek word *eiréné*. It signifies quiet or rest. However, coming from John, who is Jewish, he would be thinking of the deeper peace, or *shalom*, conveyed by the Hebrew people. That goes beyond the peace and quiet to a state of wholeness. It is a state where all of the essential points of a matter (life) are properly joined together. Thus, it is a state of harmony and which has no lack. It is the state of perfect wholeness from God when sin and misery are eliminated in our glorification.

As noted, the verb for these is in the future tense. These “will be with you from God the Father.” Some texts say, “with us,” rather than, “with you.” Either way, what is conveyed remains the same. The addressees are to receive these things. As far as the Greek, it simply reads, “God Father.” There is no article. However, there will be an article before both “Son” and “Father” in the words to come. Therefore, John is conveying the thought of “God our Father.” He is the Father of His people who have been brought into the covenant through Christ.

John next says, “and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” In the Greek, John uses the preposition “from” before both “God the Father” and “the Lord Jesus Christ.” It is to clearly show the relation of both to the people of God. They are separate personalities. This blessing of grace, mercy, and peace is received from both Sources out of the single Godhead. By referring to both in this way, John acknowledges the distinctiveness of the Father and the Son, and yet they both possess equal authority to grant such things. Each provides the blessings based on His particular working within the Godhead.

The reason for being so specific here is certainly to support the truth of the incarnation of Christ, which he will clearly deal with in verses 7 and 10. In his gospel and in his first epistle, John went to great lengths to ensure that the dual nature of Christ – being fully God and fully Man – was highlighted. To deny either of these principles then defines the term “antichrist,” as he will again note in verse 7 of this letter.

John next describes “the Lord Jesus Christ,” by saying, “the Son of the Father.” The phrase, as used in the Greek, is not found anywhere else. The Father/Son relationship is described in numerous ways, but the wording here – *tou Huiou tou Patros* – is unique. This is to clearly indicate – without any equivocation – that Jesus Christ is fully God. As both are God, both can bestow the grace, mercy, and peace upon believers individually from within the Godhead. John’s words intimately connect the Father and the Son, and yet they also show a distinction between the two.

John then finishes with another combination of words not seen elsewhere, *en alētheia kai agapē*, or “in truth and love.” Saying this sets the tone for the coming words of verses 4-6. However, the words also extend beyond those verses in the sense that those who deny the dual nature of Christ do “not have God” (verse 9), and are therefore excluded from the words of this salutation. Because this is so, John will tell true believers how they are to be dealt with.

As an important note, the words “in truth and love” are connected with “grace, mercy, and peace will be with you.” Because of the length of the verse, one might assume that “in truth and love” belonged to the Sonship of Christ in relation to the Father, but that is not John’s intent. God – both Father and Son – will extend these blessings of grace, mercy, and peace to His people in truth and love.

Life application: It is unreasonable to assume, as the Gnostics whom he commonly refutes in his letters, that Jesus is somehow subordinate to, or essentially separate from, the Father. Rather, they are co-equal, and they are distinct entities within one Essence.

The comforting part of what John says here is that both members are providing what we need in relation to grace, mercy, and peace through their eternal counsel. In this, these things exist right now, and yet they will be forthcoming for all eternity as well. There is no time that these do not extend to God’s people, and therefore, there is no time that God’s people are apart from the issuance of them. In other words, the doctrine of eternal salvation is implicitly seen in this salutation. Thank God for what He has done, and for what He is doing, for us.

O God! To read the words of the Bible, and to know that we are included in such marvelous promises because of Christ Jesus is a perfect blessing upon our souls. It is as if receiving cold water on a hot day to know that the future holds the absolute surety of

Grace, Mercy, and Peace for us as we await the coming of Jesus in this difficult and sin-stained world. And so, we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen.

I rejoiced greatly that I have found *some* of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. 2 John -4

John just conferred a blessing upon his recipient saying, "Grace, mercy, *and* peace will be with you ... in truth and love." He now brings in a happy note concerning both truth and love, even though love is not directly stated in this verse. He begins with, "I rejoiced greatly."

He uses the word *lian*, which signifies "exceedingly" by taking a thought and elevating it to a higher level. John was truly overjoyed, as he next says, "that I have found *some* of your children walking in truth." The Greek word translated as "of your children" is obscure. It more literally says, "out of your children." Thus, it is inferred that a portion of the whole, or "some," is implied.

This doesn't mean that some are not, but it could simply be that John observed a part of the body, and they were all walking in the truth. If the portion reflects the whole, then the whole is a well-grounded body. In other words, if a group from a church were to visit another church, and that group was very grounded in proper doctrine, it could be assumed that all the rest were likewise grounded. This would certainly be a cause for rejoicing greatly.

It is important to note that the state of any other children is not noted. Thus, either an inference concerning the whole is implied, or John was being courteous to only speak of those who were actually walking in the truth. Either way, it is a note of encouragement, focusing on the positive.

From there, he finishes with, "as we received commandment from the Father." The Father is considered the Source of all such things. For example, Jesus said, "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:31). This type of sentiment is repeated by Jesus elsewhere. The Father is considered the Source, whereas Jesus is the instrument through which the Father works. Therefore, a commandment from Jesus originally stems from the will of the Father.

The believers John is referring to were walking in the truth. But, as noted above, they were also walking in love (which John spoke of in the previous verse). That will be seen in verse 5.

Life application: If you read the seven letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, John follows a similar pattern to these letters because he first introduces a word of encouragement and commendation. This is a good way of setting the tone in any letter and makes saying any negative thoughts easier. It also allows those negatives aspects to be received more favorably. A note of encouragement should be repeated at the end of a letter as well if at all possible.

In his opening words, “I rejoice that,” his tone is acknowledging to his addressee that she has been a part of what brought her children to this state. The tense of what he is saying is that they were not only found in a good light, but that they are continuing on in that same walk.

In the final part of the verse where John says, “as we received commandment from the Father,” it is not speaking of a specific commandment, but rather it embodies the entire teaching of Scripture which was available at the time along with any oral directives from the apostles.

Today, when we see someone who is faithfully following the Lord and is setting an example for those around him to act in the same manner, we should take the time to acknowledge his faithfulness. It is good and proper, and it will also likely spur him on to an even greater witness in the future.

Heavenly Father, give us the wisdom and desire to walk in Your truth and to follow Your commands. And also give us the ability to lead others down that same path as well. May our walk be as faithful witnesses and lights to those whose eyes are watching. We pray this so that You will be glorified in their lives as well! Amen.

And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. 2 John -5

John just spoke of walking in the truth just “as we received commandment from the Father.” He now uses that thought, expanding on it in this verse. He begins with, “And

now I plead with you, lady.” “And now” indicates that John is beginning the substance of his letter and its stated reason. When he says, “I plead with you,” he uses a term which indicates a personal rather than a general request; and as a request it is formal, but not as a command or directive. After this, he will next insert a somewhat parenthetical statement.

His address is a highly unusual one to write to a church. Therefore, it is probably either to an individual woman named Kyria, or John is using the word “kyria” (which means “lady”) as a means of protecting the church from persecution. The Greek reads, “And now I implore you, Kyria.”

Either way, he now moves to the main section of the epistle, saying, “not as though I wrote a new commandment to you.” John’s intent is to stir up what has been said in the past as a reminder. His words concern what has already been said, and it is hoped that in the repetition, there will be a sinking in of what is most essential – the preeminent commandment. With that thought put forth, he continues with, “but that which we have had from the beginning.” In other words, from the first moment of our faith we received it and understood it. His words of 1 John 2 come back to mind –

“Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.” 1 John 2:7

John is certainly referring to this first epistle. The number of parallels between the two letters shows that he clearly had the contents of that letter on his mind. In just thirteen verses, there are at least eight such parallels. John is being consistent in order to ensure his reader is grounded in what he believes is most necessary. Peter did the same thing in his letters –

“For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. ¹³ Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding *you*.”

-2 Peter 1:12, 13

With this seen, John finishes this verse with, “that we love one another.” Again, there is a close parallel to the words of 1 John 3 –

“For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” 1 John 3:11

Though this refers to his first epistle, it was first taken from his gospel, where he noted the words of Jesus –

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34, 35

If the main verse is reordered, putting the parenthetical thought at the end, we can understand what is directly stated. “And now I plead with you, lady, that we love one another. It’s not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we’ve had from the beginning.”

John is repeating that word from the Lord, again, to ensure it would continue to be remembered by those who do believe, and then to be passed on to those who will believe. As this is the substance of John’s first petition to his addressee, and as we are implicitly included in the letter because it is now found in the Bible, we should pay heed to the words in our own lives.

Life application: John will explain what he means by loving one another in the verses ahead. It is not a gushy “must love everyone that I meet” type of love. In fact, the opposite is the case as we will see.

John holds love within the Christian context in the highest place, but where anti-Christians are concerned, he takes a totally different view. This is completely in line with Jesus’ own teachings. People tend to quickly skim over Jesus’ words of judgment and cling to His words of love. It is inappropriate for us to tell others about the love of Christ without warning of the judgment to come. We need to have a careful balance in our Christian lives – loving as instructed and judging when necessary.

To love at the expense of judgment reduces the gospel to a meaningless social context, and to judge at the expense of love reduces our religion to legalistic finger-pointing and hypocritical demonstrations of superiority. Let us have balance, just as our Lord has.

Lord Jesus, may what we present to others about You never fail to show the entire scope of what You expect. Where love is present, there is also judgment. May we never shy away from a proper presentation of Your gospel message. Amen.

This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it. 2 John -6

John just said that believers have a commandment. It is “that we love one another.” What he now says has a definite article before “love.” He says, “This is the love.” He is speaking of a specific love that has already been discussed. He then describes that love as, “that we walk according to His commandments.”

To walk signifies the course of life and the character displayed in the individual. Loving one another means that we walk according to the commandments of God in Christ. With that understood, John next explains what that means, saying, “This is the commandment.”

His words go from the plural “commandments,” to the singular “commandment.” It signifies the overarching precept. John is uniting the thought of love with the thought of obedience to the other “commandments” which are laid out by the teachings of Christ and the apostles. To love, without following the commandments given by God, is pointless. It displays the uncomfortable position of living out a social gospel where truth (meaning the truth of God) is rejected for a state of emotion. Love, without obedience, is not a truthful state of existence.

This is the same thought expressed by Jesus in His letters to the seven churches in Revelation. There He says –

“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write,
‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: ¹⁹ “I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and *as* for your works, the last *are* more than the first. ²⁰ Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.” Revelation 2:18-20

The church at Thyatira was noted for many things, including its love. But it no longer held to the commandments of God. Instead, they allowed wickedness to enter into their congregation, and thus the truth was substituted with a lie. John was writing to ensure that this would not be the case for the “elect lady and her children” (verse 1).

John next says, “that as you have heard from the beginning.” John has been speaking in the first person – “we walk.” He now turns to the second person – “you have heard.” He is speaking of himself and the other apostles as the ones who, even from the outset, had proclaimed these things. In proclaiming them, his hearers had heard them. The word had not changed, and the exhortation did and would remain the same. With that in mind, he finishes with, “you should walk in it.”

This is speaking of “the love” of the first clause, not “the commandment” which he just referred to. Expressing “the love” is walking according to the commandments. Thus, “the commandment” is to walk in the love. The two are united. Love without obedience is a lie. And obedience without love is dead. The two joined together form a whole and complete walk which is right, moral, and in accord with the expectations of God.

Life application: If John’s words seem repetitious, they are not. What he is saying is really no different than being told that we are not to kill another person and then being told that when we are angry, we need to act on obeying the command we have been given to not kill.

John is being thorough in his thoughts, understanding that both parts are necessary to successfully fulfill the Lord’s directives. One speaks of the action and the other speaks of the duty. As Plummer says in his commentary, “Love divorced from duty is will run riot, and duty divorced from love will starve.” As you can see, we can’t direct our attention to one without the other being off target; the two must complement each other.

Love then isn’t just a soup bowl full of feeling that we toss on the table of life for consumption. Instead, it is the whole process involved in making the soup. We have to prepare, heat, ladle, etc. the love too. And then there is the cleanup. When the love doesn’t sit quite right, we need to be ready to handle the unpleasant task of taking care of the aftereffects. All of this is involved in volitional love, not just haphazard feeling.

This then is the commandment – that we should walk in it. We need it to be a part of our daily life and actions as we go from place to place and meet with the various people with whom we come into contact. In the end, this commandment is given for our blessing and so that we will more closely resemble our Creator, and His very nature is love.

Lord, you know our proclivities for not being as loving as we should be. Help us to be more like you – loving and walking in that love as a part of our very being. You are a great, wonderful, and loving God. If we can reflect You in our daily walk, then we will have succeeded at being a true testimony to Your glory. Amen.

For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 2 John -7

John now says, “For.” There is debate if he is speaking in this verse about what he has previously said and then making this a statement based on that, or if he is speaking about what he will say next. What seems more likely, is that he is referring to what he says afterward in verse 1:8. This is particularly so because in verse 1:9, he continues with the thought of deception and not abiding in proper doctrine. Looking at it from that perspective, John says, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world.”

The word translated as “deceivers” signifies one who attempts to get others to go off course. It comes from the word *planáō*, which signifies “to wander.” It is the root of “planet,” because the planets appear to wander in the sky rather than stay fixed like the stars do. The word was used in Matthew 27:63 and 2 Corinthians 6:8. John will use the word twice in this verse, and it will not be seen again in Scripture.

What John means by saying that they have “gone out into the world” is that they go wherever they can, and at any time, to proclaim their deceitful message. It is these deceivers “who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.” The Greek reads, “those not confessing Jesus Christ coming in the flesh.” Vincent’s Word Studies explains the significance –

“The article with the participle describes the character of this class of deceivers, and does not merely assert a definite fact concerning them.”

The words here are in accord with his words of 1 John –

“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”

-1 John 2:22, 23

“By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.” 1 John 4:2, 3

To fully understand what is conveyed there, refer to the commentary on those verses. But the main significance of what John is relaying speaks of the incarnation – that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully Man. To deny this is the mark of such a deceiver. With that established, John then says, “This is a deceiver and an antichrist.” The translation is poor. There are definite articles before both words – “This is the deceiver and the antichrist.”

In other words, the deceiver is identified directly with his master. Just as those who believe in Christ are identified as being “in Christ,” these people are in the Antichrist. Those who have the Son also have the Father. Those who have the Antichrist have the devil. There are no other options but these two. The devil wants to keep his own, and so he sends out those who will do his bidding to keep others from ever coming to the truth of Christ.

Life application: The problem that needed to be addressed concerns “many” deceivers going out into the world. Imagine this! Within the lifetime of the apostle who had physically resided with, eaten with, and touched and heard the Word of God – Jesus – people were denying the very truth of the message he and the other apostles heralded. O man, o man... if people were already doing this then, how much more in the 2000 years since then.

False teachers fill our churches, our TVs, and our minds with deceit – for personal gain; it is always for personal gain. Some deceive for money, some for worldly power, and some for spiritual power, but the attack at its core comes down to personal gain. John,

again, as he has done in his gospel and in 1 John, focuses specifically on anyone who denies that Jesus Christ has come “in the flesh.” In other words, the incarnation; God uniting with man. It is the continued focus of his writings, and it is the pivotal point on which all heresy revolves.

The claim is that He is either God, but not Man, or He is Man, but not God. Fanciful inventions of the mind all try to diminish the Person and work of Jesus. The Jehovah’s Witnesses are perfect examples of this, as are the Mormons. They proclaim a false Jesus, and thus they are the antichrist.

We must remember that if the incarnation isn’t true, then there is absolutely no foundation on which the ethics of Christianity can be proclaimed – exactly what a deceiver is ultimately after – casting off the authority of God.

O God, You are God and we are Your creatures. May we never attempt to diminish the work of Christ and thereby cast off Your rule and authority. Instead, may we proudly and boldly confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, and that it is to Him that our obedience is due. Hallelujah to the King of Glory!! Amen.

Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* we may receive a full reward. 2 John -8

There is a dispute in a few words of this verse. Some manuscripts, instead of saying, “we do not lose,” say, “you do not lose.” Some also say, “you may receive,” instead of saying, “we may receive.” There is even a dispute concerning, “we worked,” as opposed to, “you worked.” The change in pronouns is dismissed by many scholars, but the outcome of what is said shows that we should not be quick to just ignore the changes. Some possibilities –

- Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* we may receive a full reward.
- Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that you may receive a full reward.
- Look to yourselves, that you do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* you may receive a full reward.

- Look to yourselves, that you do not lose those things you worked for, but *that* you may receive a full reward.

In the end, it is hard to be dogmatic, but the thought must also fit with John's logic elsewhere. He has, quite clearly, revealed the doctrine of eternal salvation. As this is so, and as John will, in the next verse, speak of abiding in Christ (meaning being saved), it cannot be that John would be speaking of a loss of salvation.

This is actually the first command given in the letter. It is therefore preeminent on the mind of John. He says it in the present tense, imperative voice. So, when he says, "Look to yourselves," he is stressing that his addressees are to be continually watchful. This command pertains to all the addressees (both the "lady" and her children), and therefore it pertains to all the recipients as well. This means everyone who reads the Bible in which it is included.

After imploring each reader to look to his own actions, he says, "that we do not lose those things we worked for." One must ask, "Does a person 'work' for salvation?" The answer is found throughout the New Testament – from John 3:16, to Ephesians 2:8, 9, and elsewhere – and the answer is, "No." Salvation is a gift, it is not of works. Rather, it is an offer of grace, and it is received by faith alone. Understanding this, John next says, "but *that* we may receive a full reward."

A full reward implies salvation has not been lost, but rather the full rewards that would otherwise be due can be lost. The term "lose" is written to the believer in the immediate context of the statement and it means to "destroy." To the unbeliever, it means their ultimate fate. To the believer, it means the destruction of rewards when standing before Christ for judgment –

"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” 2 Corinthians 5:9-11

If the final verb is inclusive of John (those things WE worked for), then he is speaking of himself and the other apostles who worked for the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Again, the changing of the pronouns must be carefully considered. Ultimately, this verse cannot be used to justify the faulty doctrine which says one can lose his salvation. Rather, it supports eternal salvation, but a loss of rewards – just as Paul so clearly presented.

Life application: The words here are similar to the warning that was given by Jesus to the apostles in Mark 13:9 –

“But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them.” Mark 13:9

The apostles worked diligently to bring us this wonderful message of salvation. Starting with the Jews, that same message spread to the Gentiles, and it has continued to spread among them for two thousand years. In this, and in our other efforts for the church of God in Christ, we can even have rewards. Let us not lose such things but persevere in the power of our Lord!

Lord Jesus, we know that many have gone before us, giving up everything in order to bring Your word to us. Give us the wisdom to walk in Your truth, persevere in faithfulness, and to pass on to others the same message, without addition or manipulation. May the stream of full rewards for faithfulness to You be continued on until Your coming! Amen.

Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 2 John -9

As noted in verse 8, what is stated now in verse 9 is not explaining the words, “we do not lose those things we worked for, but *that* we may receive a full reward.” One does

not “work” for salvation, nor does one “work” in order to keep being saved. What John now says contrasts what was said there, it does not explain it. Understanding this, John says, “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ.”

Two points concerning this. First, in this verse, both instances of the word “Christ” are preceded by a definite article in the Greek – “the Christ.” There is the true Christ, and then there are false Christs and there is the antichrist. John is setting a distinction between the true Christ and any other supposed “Christ.” Secondly, some manuscripts state “goes ahead” instead of “transgresses.” The idea is that Christ (the Christ, meaning Jesus) has set forth His doctrine. Those who do not accept what He has put forth transgress that doctrine and do not abide in it. The thought being presented is similar to that found in 1 John 2 –

“He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” 1 John 2:4-6

One cannot separate the teachings of Christ from who Christ is. As He is God, He cannot contradict Himself. To say, “I follow Christ,” and then to reject His teaching is contradictory. For such a person, John says he “does not have God.”

John is going back to verse 7 and showing who he was speaking about there – “For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh.” It is these people who transgress and who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ. Verse 8 was a warning to those who had already accepted the true Christ that they should continue in their proper faith. To not do so would not lead to a loss of salvation, but to a loss of reward. For those who never came to Christ, they do not have God at all.

The reason is obvious. One cannot have God if He does not have access to God through His only Mediator. Jesus is the God/Man. He makes a connection to the infinite God possible. Without that mediatorial connection, man remains forever separated from God.

With that understood, John next says, “He who abides in the doctrine of Christ.” The opposite proposition is now stated. There are those who transgress what the Christ has

stated, and they do not abide in His doctrine. And then, there are those who abide in the doctrine of the Christ. The way one abides in His doctrine is to believe in the true Christ, as He is presented in Scripture.

For such a person who has believed in Jesus as He is presented in Scripture, meaning God incarnate, he “has both the Father and the Son.” To have the Son is to have the Father. To not have the Son is to not have the Father. It is such a simple proposition that it is hard to see how people muddy these waters.

What John is saying here is in line with his words of 1 John 4. There he uses the word “abide” six times in just these five verses –

“No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.”

To confess that Jesus is the Son of God, meaning that He is God incarnate, is the continuously repeated thought of John. He is setting any other belief as false because it is based on a false teaching.

For one more validation of this, we can go again to John 2 –

“Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”

-1 John 2:22, 23

Life application: That the Messiah, or Christ, would be fully God is revealed not only in the New Testament, but in both testaments of the Bible. For example, the book of Zechariah teaches this in the Old. To read the Bible and deny this then means one “does not abide in the doctrine of Christ.” False teachers, either explicitly denying this truth, or making up other aberrant doctrines, have no part in God.

The doctrine of Christ is the full teaching and reality of who Jesus is. He is the Son of God the Father. Therefore, He has all the characteristics of His Father. He is also the Son of Man, and therefore He has all the characteristics of Man. This is the doctrine of Christ, and this is what we are expected to accept at face value.

Denying one or the other, or making something up in our heads which has no basis in reality (such as the Mormon teaching that Jehovah God was once a man who became God), therefore excludes these adherents from any relationship at all with Christ and thus with the Father.

How much better is it that we put aside such lying and deceitfulness, and simply trust God and His word! By doing this, He is properly glorified, and we are eternally saved.

Lord God, help us not to waste the most precious gift of all by denying the one and only possibility of reconciliation to You. Keep us from being seduced by such twisted and heretical doctrines. May we experience the joy of honoring You for eternity through Jesus. In Him alone are we reconciled to You. By His precious blood this is possible! Hallelujah for what You have done for us. Amen.

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; 2 John -10

John now refers to those who do “not abide in the doctrine of Christ” (verse 1:9). That is referring to those “who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh” (verse 1:7). John says that such “is a deceiver and an antichrist” (verse 1:7). Understanding this context, John now says – clearly and unambiguously – a command, “If anyone comes to you.” The words are in the indicative mood, not the subjunctive. It is not a possibility, but an assurance. In essence, “These people are out there, and you can expect them to come to you.”

He then explains who he is referring to by saying, “and does not bring this doctrine.” It is the doctrine he has referred to, meaning that of Christ being God incarnate. If someone comes who does not bring this doctrine, John warns them by saying, “do not receive him into your house.”

The context has to be maintained. John is not telling his reader to not provide human assistance to someone who is, for example, injured. It would be contrary to proper morality to not receive in a person who desperately needed it. The key to understanding his words is “this doctrine.” The person is not coming to the door selling vacuums. He is not coming to the door with a gunshot wound. And, he is not coming to the door to tell you your house is on fire and you need to get out. The person has come with the purpose of conveying heretical doctrine. Once this is understood, “do not receive him into your house.”

But John goes even further, saying, “nor greet him.” The Greek reads, *chairein autō mē legete* – “rejoice him not tell,” or more understandably, “Do not tell him, ‘Rejoice!’” The word “rejoice” was the customary way of formally greeting someone, just as “shalom” is to a Hebrew audience. Today, we might say, “Blessings to you,” or something like that.

Again, the context needs to be remembered. If you are on the street and you pass a person, it is only natural to tell that person, “Good day to you!” We don’t first stop each person and say, “Do you hold to the doctrine of Christ?” Rather, we treat people with common courtesy. But, if you see the Jehovah’s Witnesses knocking on doors, knowing this is what they are doing, and knowing that they are presenting heretical doctrine, we are directed to not greet them at all.

Likewise, if they, or the Mormons, or any other cult that denies the fundamental truth that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, when we know that is what they have come to convey when they knock on the door, we are not to allow them in, and when we tell them to buzz off, we are not to extend them the courtesy of a formal goodbye, such as, “Be blessed as you head out.” John will explain why he has so ordered this in the coming verse.

Life application: Verses 4-6 spoke of love in the Christian context, not an “all-inclusive must love unconditionally despite bad doctrine” type of love. From verses 7-9, John spoke of deceivers who have neither the Father nor the Son.

He is giving a progression of thought, leading directly to the main impetus for writing the letter in the first place – careful attention to not accepting or even condoning heresy.

Because these people are deceivers, they will come with a friendly guise and speak as if they are competent and correct on matters of faith. Such is how the devil swayed Adam and Eve, and such is how he attempted to sway Jesus. The defining line is Jesus. Therefore, one must be aware of who Jesus is and which “Jesus” is being presented.

Some of the most flagrant cases of false doctrine that you can expect at your door in the modern world are the Mormons and the Jehovah’s Witnesses. They bring a false Jesus. Such as these are not to be given common Christian hospitality. This may seem hard to reconcile with other New Testament teachings, but it’s really not.

Jesus said, “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,” (Matthew 5:44). We cannot demonstrate love to our enemies if we condone the very teaching in their lives that condemns them to hell. By greeting them and receiving them, we are implicitly acknowledging that what they are teaching is valid when it clearly isn’t. So, instead of demonstrating love by greeting them, we are actually demonstrating a lack of it.

To love them is to reject them from fellowship and to pray for them. Don’t be misled by anyone who says it is ok to condone heresy. Instead, ignore them as well. Be strong in your faith and be firm in your convictions. Souls are in the balance and you bear responsibility.

Lord, even in our small circle of acquaintances – family, co-workers, and so on – we know that there are those who hold to heretical teachings. Help us to be proper examples of how to demonstrate firmness by rejecting their lies. May our firm examples of holding fast to what is sound lead them to repentance and salvation. Amen.

...for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. 2 John -11

The words of this verse should be taken together with the previous verse to get a full understanding of the context –

“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; ¹¹ for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.”

With the context understood, John's words begin with, "for he who greets him." Here, he uses the same word for "greet" that he did in the previous verse. It means "to rejoice." As we saw, the word "rejoice" was the customary way of formally greeting someone in the Greek culture. And so, a good paraphrase would be, "for he who extends a courteous blessing to him." With that idea in mind, John next says that the believer who does this, "shares in his evil deeds."

The verb translated as "shares" signifies "to have a share in," or "to participate in." It was used in Hebrews 2:14 when speaking of our participation in humanity –

"Inasmuch then as the children have **partaken** of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil."

One can see the intimate connection between the two things. We are humans because we have partaken of what makes us a part of humanity. Therefore, a person who greets someone who does not abide in the doctrine of Christ partakes in his evil deeds. Or, as the Greek more literally reads, "partakes in the works of him, the evil."

As you can see, the emphasis is on the word "evil." In greeting someone who bears such wicked doctrine, we imply that what they are doing is ok, and thus we not only share in their evil, but we bear the responsibility for the harmful effects that result from their false doctrine. The thought here is reflected in Paul's writings in several ways, such as these two thoughts –

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?" 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15

"Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure." 1 Timothy 5:22

Though Paul's words especially cover other issues, the general idea is the same, even if John's words are more direct.

Life application: Suppose someone from the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, or any other faith or organization that denies the fundamental tenets of Christianity comes to your door. What do you do?

The previous verse gave us the answer – “Do not receive him into your house nor greet him.” Therefore, John's words of this verse give us the reason – “For he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.”

Welcoming them isn't a light and simple matter; it is light vs. darkness and life vs. death. Ultimately, we are in a battle against the evil forces of this world. Anything which contradicts the truth of Jesus Christ is of the devil (1 John 3:8). By greeting someone who is actively promoting an anti-Christian cause, or an actual heresy of the Christian faith, we are in effect condoning his work. When we do this, we solidify the thinking that what he is doing is acceptable.

This is no different than having inter-faith prayer meetings. Christians must never hold prayer meetings with those of other faiths. By doing so we implicitly acknowledge that the person of the other faith is praying to a real god who really hears, even though this is not the case.

There is One God and He has revealed Himself in the Trinitarian model of Christianity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are to hold to this truth as the supreme test of what is and what is not acceptable within the confines of our faith. Jesus Christ is the second member of this eternal Godhead – fully God and fully Man. If agreement on this cannot be reached, the person is to be rejected as a member of the family of faith. God doesn't condone heresy, and neither can we.

Heavenly Father, in the Bible are strong and sober reminders that we are participants in a great spiritual battle for human souls. We are reminded, again and again, that we are accountable for our actions when dealing with others who believe differently than we do concerning the core tenets of proper doctrine. Lead us as we walk through this world of sin and heresy so that we may be proper lights, shining forth the truth of Your gospel. Amen.

Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. 2 John -12

John's short letter begins its closing remarks here, and it is in a manner which is very similar to his next letter, 3 John. He begins with, "Having many things to write to you." It is an indication that John had a lot on his mind, but either time, strength, or maybe caution because of the sensitive nature of what he desired to say, precluded him from putting his thoughts down. For whatever reason, he cut his thoughts short.

He then next says, "I did not wish *to do so* with paper and ink." The words "to do so" are supplied by the translators, supposedly for clarity. However, they then make the verse illogical. The two thoughts would show someone not thinking clearly –

"I have a whole bunch to write to you, but I don't want to do so with paper and ink."
"What are you going to write with then? Crayons and a plank of wood?"

Rather, John is saying, "I had a lot to write to you, but I purposed not with paper and ink." It shows that despite having the desire to write, he decided that putting his words to paper and ink was not the best means of conveying what he desired to say.

As a point of interest, the word translated as "paper" is *chartés*. It is found only here in Scripture. Vincent's Word Studies explains the word –

"The Egyptian papyrus or byblus, *Cyperus papyrus*, anciently very common, but not now found within the limits of the country. It is a tall, smooth flag or reed, with a large triangular stalk, containing the pith which furnished the paper. The paper was manufactured by cutting the pith into strips, arranging them horizontally, and then placing across them another layer of strips, uniting the two layers by a paste, and subjecting the whole to a heavy pressure. The upper and middle portions of the reed were used for this purpose. The fact that the plant is no longer found is significant in connection with Isaiah's prophecy that "the flags (Hebrews *suph*, papyrus) shall waste away" (Isaiah 19:6). The plant grew in shallow water or in marshes, and is accordingly represented on the monuments as at the side of a stream or in irrigated lands. The Jews wrote on various materials, such as the leaves of the olive and palm, the rind of the pomegranate, and the skins of animals. The tablet (*πινακίδιον*, Luke 1:63) was in very common use. It consisted of thin pieces of wood, strung together, and either plain, or covered with papyrus or with wax."

The word translated as “ink” is melan. It literally means “black.” This is its third and last use in Scripture. Again, Vincent’s says, “Ink was prepared of soot or of vegetable or mineral substances. Gum and vitriol were also used. Colored inks, red and gold, were also employed.”

John next says, “but I hope to come to you and speak face to face.” Whatever is on John’s mind is either not pressing enough to spend a lot of time writing, or it is too important or sensitive to be put into writing. Thus, it will have to wait until they can speak “face to face.” The Greek literally reads, “mouth to mouth.” As Paul uses the term, “face to face,” in 1 Corinthians 13:12, John’s words here should be translated as he says them, thus avoiding the confusion of having two separate thoughts translated in the same way.

Finally, John gives the reason for such an intimate discussion, saying, “that our joy may be full.” Here, the verb is a perfect participle. It is more rightly translated as, “having been completed,” or “filled full.” John is saying that fellowship in such matters is far more satisfying than simply putting thoughts on paper. Such thoughts can be misconstrued, fail to express proper emotion, and so on. It is evident from Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 7 that the words of his previous letter to those at Corinth had been taken in an unintended light. Because of this, he spent time and effort to ensure that things were properly understood. However, when speaking intimately, the joy of the conversation, and the surety that the discussion is fully understood, is always a blessing to the souls of those who participate in them.

Life application: It is apparent that John had a lot on his mind when he started writing but wearied of “paper and ink.” Instead, he decided to hold off on his thoughts until he could speak with the elect lady.

When John would meet up with the lady, he says their conversation would make his joy full. The way he says it brings about the thought of not only being full, but continuing to be filled, even to overflowing. He gives the same sentiment in 1 John 1:4 – “And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” John had a passion for those he addressed, and it is apparent that he truly reveled in them and their company. We can learn a great deal from such an attitude as we relate to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ – not only sharing time with them, but truly reveling in their company and sharing the close bond which is with our Lord and Savior.

Heavenly Father, what a joy it is to read your Word each day and to share in the personal thoughts of those who have written down the various passages of it. They are thoughts which deal with their relationships with You, with other people of faith, and how we also should interact between one another. Thank You for including these treasures in Your word. Amen.

The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen. 2 John -13

John now makes a change in his address from the previous verse. The two verses are presented in the following manner –

Having many things to write to you (2nd person plural), I did not wish *to do so* with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you (2nd person plural) and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

The children of your (2nd person singular) elect sister greet you (2nd person singular). Amen.

First, in not mentioning the “elect sister” in the greeting there are various ideas. One is that the elect sister is either deceased or absent at the time. The other is that the “elect sister” is actually a church body. Therefore, the greeting is coming from those of the church who form the body.

This would be the same as if the “elect lady” of verse 1 is a church body. But then why make the change to the singular if it is addressed to a church and not an individual? It seems unlikely. However, the same type of change from the singular to the plural is found in Moses’ words when addressing Israel in Deuteronomy 4, for example.

There, it is certain that he is speaking to all, but at times it is focusing on individual responsibility within the whole, and at times, it is focusing on collective responsibility of the whole. The change here could be the same. It does not answer definitively whether the elect lady (and the elect sister) is a church or an individual, but neither option is excluded.

Either way, and because of this, John’s words can be used as a template for writing to either individuals or a group. The main idea to be gained from his words is that the focus

of the believer is to be on Jesus Christ, but it must be Jesus Christ as he is portrayed in Scripture – God incarnate. Nothing else can be considered acceptable to identify a true believer. Greetings between individuals and churches are only to be extended to those of the true faith.

It would not be acceptable for a church that accepts Jesus Christ as God incarnate to write a letter to a Jehovah's Witnesses congregation saying, "We greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Lord of one is not the same as the "Lord" of the other. Likewise, a single believer in Jesus Christ should not write such a letter to an apostate individual or group, greeting him or them in such a way.

Fraternal greetings within the context of the faith must only be made to those who are grounded in the same proper faith. With this understood, John closes with "Amen," or "so be it" and "truth." Though some manuscripts do not include this, it is probably rightly included in the letter. The word beautifully closes out this short but important letter from the hand of John.

Life application: From the pen of the heartfelt and beloved apostle of the Lord Jesus, we have searched the intimate words of John to "the elect lady and her children." We can be pleased that God kept the nature of the true recipient from us so that we can use this letter as a guide when addressing individuals or church bodies.

Take time to re-read the letter one more time before you finish your study today, and think on the layout and theme of it. In the future, try to use it as a guideline when writing on similar issues. If this is a part of the Bible, then it is approved of God in both style and content.

Closing out with the word "Amen," or "truth," makes a nice touch. Truth has been the very focus of the letter. Where truth is, there will be no tendency to demonstrate love without correction – something John has carefully pointed out. Love without truth is ultimately a condemning love. Let us remember this as we speak and write about the truth of God's plan for humanity.

Lord Jesus, what a treat it is to study and think on the depth of Your precious word. You have given it for our edification. Each day we read it, we feel so edified. We peer into its love and truth, and come away with a deeper knowledge of what touches Your very

heart. Until You come for us, may we always demonstrate love, but may it be a love which is combined with truth. Amen.