

2nd John

A Commentary

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2nd John

2 John 1 “The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;”

“The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not I only, but also all they that know the truth;” (ASV)

In his greeting, John called himself “The elder.” There are two possible senses in which John may be calling himself “elder.” Peter called himself “an elder” in First Peter 5:1, which designated himself as being in the office of an elder. So the word “elder” in this text might refer to the office itself, or it could refer to advanced age. One gets no help here from the Greek word in the context, which is πρεσβύτερος. This word can mean either the advanced age of an individual or the office of an elder. Whichever way one might argue this word, this writer believes the lessons will be the same. Yet, he personally believes the term probably refers to John’s age, because of the singular construction of the phrase “The elder.” The terms for the office itself are usually used in the plural.

The term “elect lady” has also given people trouble over the years. Some believe that John was speaking to “*a congregation of the Lord’s people,*” while others believe it is “*the lady Electra,*” others believe it is “*the elect Kyria,*” while others believe it is an unnamed Christian lady. One cannot be certain which of these is the one to which this letter was addressed. Notice some of the schools of thought regarding the word “lady.”

“Mistress, lady, Mrs. It is used in 2 John 1:1, 5

in reference to either a local church itself or a well-respected lady within the church. Some have speculated that the lady may have been Mary, the mother of Jesus” (Zodhiates).

“The elect lady’ is a metaphorical reference to the church, often spoken of in the NT under the figure of a bride, or a pure woman” (Coffman, p. 485).

“If the ‘lady’ was the church, who were the children of the lady addressed? The church has no existence apart from those who constitute the membership. The elect lady had a sister who also had children (v. 13). On the assumption that the elect lady was the church, and her children are the members of the church, who then was the sister, and what did she and her children represent? From all the facts in the case, the preponderance of evidence seems logical to lead to the conclusion that the terms under consideration are to be literally interpreted; that the elect lady was some faithful sister known to John; and that she may have born the name Cyria” (Woods, p. 338).

Whichever view one chooses to believe the “elect lady” represents (whether a person or a congregation), John says he earnestly, or sincerely, loves her/it. He also stated that all who love the truth love the lady as well.

“So well known was this sister’s faithfulness and loyalty, others were drawn to her, and likewise loved her” (Woods, p. 339).

All brethren everywhere should love one another, **must** love one another, because of the common faith

which they hold. There are no national, racial or social barriers with regard to love between Christians. One must love his brethren wherever they may be found and in whatever circumstances they may be found.

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34).

The phrase “love one another” is found thirteen times in the New Testament (John 13:34; 15:12, 17; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5). There are other passages which talk about the love one should have for his brethren, but only thirteen which use the exact term referred to above. John used the term ten of the thirteen times in which it is found in the Scriptures. The phrase “love one another” refers to a reciprocal love, i.e., all involved love each other.

John’s emphasis on truth should also be observed in this letter. It is obvious that he loves them because they stand in truth and were standing with those who also love the truth.

“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23).

2 John 2 “For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.”

“for the truth's sake which abideth in us, and it shall be with us for ever:” (ASV)

The basis for the love spoken of in verse one is spelled out here — it is for “the truth’s sake.” It is because of a mutual love for the truth and all it stands for that they have such great love for one another. Truth is the glue of mutual Christian love.

“John loved this faithful sister and the children

embraced in the address, not because of an unusual attractiveness which they may have possessed, not for any personal charm they have exhibited, but because of the truth which dwelt both in him and in them. It is a vivid and impressive description of the reason for the love each faithful disciple feels for all other disciples” (Woods, p. 339).

This writer has been asked countless times, “*Why cannot brethren get along; why cannot brethren love each other and treat one another with the respect each one deserves?*” The answer to these questions is found in this text. Those who do not act in a Christian manner to one another have not embedded the truth in their hearts as they should — they are not allowing GOD’s truth to guide them. The key to Christian fellowship is found in the great love found in the Bible which the GODHEAD has for mankind. When one loves the TRUTH as the elect lady and all of those referred to in verse one, then he will be drawn to all others who love that truth. Those who truly love and practice the truth will love one another without regard to the idiosyncracies each has.

The “truth” of this passage cannot refer to anything other than the great body of truth referred to as GOD’s word, the Scriptures. John assured his readers that this body of truth will always exist. It will always exist so that those who wish to come to GOD will have an accurate guide to follow. When all seems to go wrong, this body of truth provides the column to lean on, the foundation which cannot be destroyed. This body of truth will always bring Christians (and mankind) hope and comfort.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, and is

profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of GOD may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

At times, man has taken it upon himself to attempt the destruction of THE TRUTH, to stamp out the Christian faith — **but he has always failed and always will!** GOD’s word will always be around for those who love truth. He will see to that through His providence. Over the years that this writer has been preaching (over 45 years), he has seen many versions come and go, each one claiming to be the most accurate, and yet with time they have been discarded on the trash heap of history. The test of time will determine those that GOD wants to remain, those which truly are accurate translations. And in His providence GOD will preserve His word for all.

Those who truly love the truth and practice it to the best of their abilities will abide with the truth even in eternity. Truth will always abide in those who truly love and cherish it, and that is why they will love their brethren the way the Bible commands them to.

“Despite the opposition which the truth engendered, the difficulties which beset their way, and the antagonism of ungodly men, John assured them that the truth would find its true home in them forever” (Woods, p. 339).

“I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another

Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16-17).

“Note the prophesy in this. John could see the approaching storms of persecution and hatred of the truth into which he and the others had been guided by the Holy Spirit, but he was supremely confident that nothing would ever be able to destroy it” (Coffman, p. 486).

2 John 3 “Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from GOD the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.”

“Grace, mercy, peace shall be with us, from GOD the Father, and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.” (ASV)

“Grace” (χάρις) is often considered to mean the unmerited favor of GOD which He bestows toward all men and through which He extends mercy and peace to those who obey Him. The word mercy is from ἔλεος, which means *“mercy, compassion, active pity”* (Zodhiates). Thayer says it is *“kindness or good will towards the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them.”* Mercy extends from GOD to man and deals with all that GOD has done so that man may have relief from the burdens of sin. Such mercy only has an effect upon those who are sanctified (Jude 1), because they have accepted it. In Jude’s letter, he wished GOD’s mercy would be multiplied to them (v. 2). No doubt the same sentiment was felt by John.

The word “peace” is from εἰρήνη. It is the opposite

of war and dissension (Zodhiates). Wuest says that *“to make peace...is to join together that which has been separated”* (p. 234). To have peace is to have tranquility, to be without fear. Biblically speaking, the only time one truly has peace is when he has a right relationship with GOD. When one has peace with GOD, he has peace with his brethren who love GOD; he has nothing to fear.

John sets forth the important principle *“that such blessings as grace, mercy and peace are to come from GOD and Christ if they are to be lasting”* (Zerr, p. 289).

Woods gives a list of ideas associated with these three words (grace, mercy, peace) which is worthy of consideration.

“God’s free grace is extended to men in their sins. And His mercy rids them of the misery which a consciousness of sin produces. Peace is the resultant state where grace and mercy have operated...Grace evidences the state of God’s mind toward the sinner; mercy, the act of love; and peace, the gift of love — the effect resulting from grace and mercy... Grace suggests the first approach, the loving disposition on the part of the great Jehovah to supply the means of salvation to a rebellious and recreant race. Mercy is grace expressing itself in action, and peace is the blessed condition of the heart redeemed by blood and restored by grace to the status of reconciliation” (p. 340).

“recreant” — “crying for mercy: COWARDLY 2: unfaithful to duty or allegiance” (Webster, p. 716).

Throughout all of John’s writings, one can see an

emphasis on the son-ship of Christ to the Father. This text is no exception.

“in truth and love” While grace is shown in a general sense to all men, in that GOD sent His Son to redeem sinful man, the only ones who can truly enjoy and benefit from this grace, mercy and peace are those who accept and practice the teachings of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The fact must be accepted that the blessings of this text come from the GODHEAD and can only be appreciated by those obedient to its word. Note that truth and love must exist in order to have the above blessings. One must love GOD, love the truth He has given, love his own soul and the souls of others.

“Truth without love may be viewed as harsh and fanatical, unfeeling and judgmental. Love without truth is empty emotion, missing that element which instructs it and gives it its proper direction” (King, p.199).

2 John 4 “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.”

“I rejoice greatly that I have found certain of thy children walking in truth, even as we received commandment from the Father.” (ASV)

The word “of” comes from ἐκ, which has the “primary meaning out of, from, of, as spoken of such objects which were before in another” (Zodhiates). Some have viewed this passage as an indication that some of her “children” were not walking in truth as they ought to, while others believe that it simply refers to those with whom he has had some form of contact. Whichever might be true, the point is the great feeling of joy John had because these were “walking in truth.”

The term “walking” is present tense, which indicates onward progression toward a goal.

They were engaged in — walking in — the truth. The term “truth” can only be considered here as that which comes from GOD. They were not walking by their own dictates, or truth as they perceived it, but according to the truth which GOD gave them.

“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

“Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

“ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Psalm 23:23).

John rejoiced that they were actively engaged in obedience to GOD.

“These children were ‘walking’ (peripatountas) in truth, a term which, in the scriptures, is often used to indicate manner of life or behaviour. It denotes not only action, but habitual action, and progress toward a goal” (Woods, p. 341).

By walking in truth, these children were carrying out, or accomplishing, the commands given by the Lord.

“the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from GOD, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe” (John 1:5-7).

“hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and

keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of GOD perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him" (1 John 2:3-5).

John could rejoice because he knew that, as long as they walked in truth, their love for GOD was growing toward perfection. This would also apply for their love for one another and even for those of the world.

2 John 5 "And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another."

"And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote to thee a new commandment, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another." (ASV)

John besought, pleaded, begged those to whom he wrote to obey his command. What command? He said this was not a new commandment, but rather an old one. Further, it was a command of which they were well aware. It was a command which John said they had from the "beginning." Of which beginning is he speaking? In 1st John 3:11, one reads, "for this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." In verse twenty-three of that same chapter one finds, "And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment." It would seem that this new commandment came through Christ. It was a new commandment for this age, this time, when men had not previously **loved as Christ (GOD) loved.**

Was love itself a new commandment? No!

"Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy

neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:18).

The basis upon which one loves his neighbor is that he loves himself. As one loves himself, he then shows that same love toward those around him. The Jews had perverted love in the time of Christ to the extent that they did not help their neighbors in times of distress as they were commanded. An example of this is seen in Luke 10:25-27.

“behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come

again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, he that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”

But note how Jesus said His disciples were to love.

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35, emphasis mine, RK).

Jesus told His disciples that the love He demanded went beyond love of self, beyond those who love in return, but is based on the kind of love which He manifested toward mankind. His love was a sacrificial love, the type of love that deity has always expressed toward man. It is a love which is undeserved by the recipient, yet freely given. If one practices this kind of love, there will be no self-centeredness in his life. One will not be concerned with the worldly view of right and wrong. He will not express the worldly view in action or words, which states that one should do unto others before they do unto him. Instead, his thinking will be Christ-centered, and his concern will be for what is right for the Lord’s kingdom, what will bring honor and glory to the Father. Thus, it will be a correct love, one that is willing to sacrifice himself for GOD and his fellow man.

2 John 6 “And this is love, that we walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.”

“And this is love, that we should walk after His commandments. This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it.” (ASV)

“In the writings of John, keeping God’s commandments is the only proof, either of faith or of love” (Coffman, p. 487).

“Love, like faith, is said to be shown by works, hence this verse says that to walk after the commandments is love; to walk means to keep moving onward” (Zerr, p. 290).

One should observe the tie between loving one another (brethren) in verse five and the proof of love — walking after the commandments (v. 6). John repeatedly drove the point home that love will cause one to keep GOD’s commandments. No matter how much one may protest that he loves GOD, if he does not obey GOD, he does not love GOD.

“For this is the love of GOD, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3).

“whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of GOD perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him” (1 John 2:5).

“If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15).

“Where the love (of GOD, RK) does not exist, the keeping of God’s commandments is irksome and hard. To the faithful, the keeping of His commandments is not grievous, because love makes them light” (Woods, p. 344).

This passage reminds this writer of a saying with which all are familiar, one in which a little boy was carrying his brother on his back, struggling a little, while he stated, *“He ain’t heavy — he’s my brother.”* Love

caused him to carry his brother, and that love caused him to consider his weight as nothing at all. Love caused him to sacrifice for his brother. Love for GOD should cause one to consider GOD's commands as a burden light indeed.

"John defines love, not as a sentiment or an emotion, but as obedience to God's commands"
(MacArthur, p. 1972).

Notice the use of the word "walk" twice in this verse. It is a word which describes an ongoing movement. One's love is to grow greater and greater for his fellow man, but as is being emphasized in this context, it must especially be shown toward those who love and abide in the truth — his brethren.

"Brotherly love and obedience to God are inseparable; the one fails in absence of the other" (Woods, p. 344).

"this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1 John 3:23).

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40).

Though Jesus was talking about the Old Law in the above passage, one can see how what He said also pertains to the New Testament law as well. Especially when one looks at the writings of John can he see that

this is true.

2 John 7 “For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

“For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, even they that confess not that Jesus Christ cometh in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.” (ASV)

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of GOD: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of GOD” (1 John 4:2).

The word “For” in this passage links what has just been said to what John is about to say. Why should the brethren walk in the commandments of the Lord? Why should they walk in love? Because of the deceivers who walk in the world.

“It is imperative that you be joined together in love and allow this love to issue in Christian conduct, always keeping the commandments which have been given. To do so is to erect the strongest possible barriers against error” (Woods, p. 344).

The threat of error’s influencing one is always present, because the deceivers are always present.

“deceivers” — πλάνοϛ — *“roving (as a tramp), i.e., (by implication) an imposter or misleader; – deceiver, seducing”* (Strong); *“Misleading, leading into error...a vagabond, ‘tramp,’ imposter...corrupted, deceiver”* (Thayer); *“deceitful, deceiving, seducing; as a subst., a deceiver, imposter”* (Zodhiates); *“leading astray, deceitful”* (Bauer, p. 666).

These “deceivers,” these false ones, are they who seek to cause one to believe that which is not true.

John says be assured that they exist! (Note: John said there were already many deceivers. Where were they? Among the brethren.) This is a bold statement by John, one which many will not make today about those who teach error. He said that they were deceivers because they did not believe Jesus came in the flesh. The heresy of the deceivers was in denying the incarnation. Various scholars have identified these teachers as Docetists, Cerinthians, or Gnostics.

Docetism — the belief that the physical body of Jesus was an illusion, as was His crucifixion — Jesus only seemed to have a body through which these things could be accomplished.

Gnosticism — the word comes from a word which means “*knowledge*.” Gnostics claimed to have a special knowledge with regard to spiritual matters which they alone could possess. They believed the creation of the world came through a series of emanations which became less god-like, until one was so far removed from being deity that it could create evil matter. They believed that an infinitely holy GOD could not touch matter and remain holy.

Cerinthianism — this term comes from a man named Cerinthus. The doctrine he espoused was a form of gnosticism. The primary belief of the system he fostered was that a holy and perfect GOD could not have created physical things, because he believed that all physical things were evil. He denied the divinity of Jesus and taught a thousand-year reign of sensuous pleasures. Sound a little like Islam?

The phrase “deceivers are entered into the world” does not mean that they have come from a source outside the planet on which human beings live. There is a sense in which this could be said, if one makes the distinction that all error proceeds from Satan, for he was indeed cast out of Heaven to the earth. But since this passage talks about men, it is simply acknowledging that these deceivers are going about the world advocating their false doctrine.

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of GOD, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” (Acts 20:28-31).

One should not forget that John was doing a part of his job as a proclaimer of the truth by describing a danger, a threat, to these Christians and those of all time. This is not a pleasant task, yet one which is vital to the spiritual welfare of the saints and must be done in every generation by faithful Christians. John said these deceivers are “antichrist.”

“antichrist” — ἀντίχριστος — “an opponent of the Messiah: —antichrist” (Strong); “adversary of the Messiah” (Thayer); “antichrist, literally an opposer of Christ or one who usurps the place of Christ, found only in John’s epistles and collectively meaning all who deny that Jesus is the Messiah and that the Messiah is come in the flesh” (Zodhiates).

It is interesting that John was the only New Testament writer who used this term. To learn how he used it, one must turn to his inspired writings.

“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time” (1 John 2:18).

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22).

“every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of GOD: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (1 John 4:3).

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (2 John 7).

Contrary to popular belief, the term “antichrist” is not used to designate any particular individual or movement. Notice the words of Woods, who in part promotes the common view held in the “Protestant” world when he singled out the Catholic church.

“The anti-Christ is the head of the apostate church — the church of Rome —and all who teach false doctrine, however much they may differ in detail in their teaching, or oppose one another in their actions, are one in their opposition to the Lord and the cause for which he died” (p. 345).

The apostate church in Rome came on the scene well after John wrote these words. Whom did the apostle

John designate as antichrist? It was the gnostics, who believed that GOD could not touch or become physical. The truth is, as Woods pointed out in the latter part of his statement, that anyone in any movement, who does not believe that Christ came in the flesh is he whom the Holy Spirit through John designated as “antichrist.”

Further, there are many who believe that the antichrist will only come when the end of time comes. But note that the apostle John stated at that time, **while he lived**, that antichrists were **already** busy troubling the church. Again, the Catholic church did not come into existence for many years after John died. It is Protestant prejudice which tried to make the Catholic church the exclusive antichrist.

In a general sense, “anti” (against) Christ is anyone who teaches any doctrine which is contrary to that which deity brought to man. This is true whether he be Protestant, Catholic, Jew, Hindu, Muslim, et cetera. In this context, John specified whom he was talking about — those who denied the incarnation.

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

“Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which we have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward.” (ASV)

“we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Hebrews 2:1).

John warned them of deceivers, whom he labeled as antichrist. Then he said, “Look to yourselves.” It is obvious that those to whom John wrote were in danger of being influenced by the deceivers, so he warned them to be careful not to allow the deceivers to gain the

upper hand. How can this be achieved? By looking at oneself, i.e., attending to his own purity in doctrine.

“Our first and paramount concern should be our own understanding before God, and this to be maintained only by an unswerving adherence to His will and way as taught in the scriptures” (Woods, p. 346).

John was saying, “Look to yourself; do not let yourself be deceived and thus lost.”

This writer finds the words of Barnes interesting here.

“When error abounds in the world, our first duty is not to attack it and make war upon it, it is to look to the citadel of our own souls, and see that all is well guarded there...if that is so, we may then go forth with confidence to meet him (one’s enemy, RK) on the open field. In relation to an error that is in the world, the first thing for a Christian to do is to take care of his own heart” (p. 364).

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (1 Corinthians 11:28).

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).

Why are disciples to look to themselves? So that “we lose not those things which we have wrought.” An

interesting paraphrase of this verse is given by Canton.

“You have already begun your work for the reward of righteous; this you do not want to lose; continue faithful and the full reward assured to all the finally faithful is yours” (p. 185).

No one wants to lose something he presently possesses, whether speaking of some ability he possesses or something he “owns.” But sometimes he foolishly allows those things to slip away from himself. John was warning that one should not allow the salvation he presently possessed to slip away. Do not lose the promised reward!

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Hebrews 2:1).

John encouraged the Hebrew Christians by saying, “Look to yourselves...that we receive a full reward.” Notice the word “we” in this passage. John, an apostle, humbly placed himself in the category of having to look to his own spiritual welfare in order to receive the reward. The reward to be attained is spoken of as being “full,” from pleres, meaning “full, i.e., filled up (as opposed to empty)” (Thayer). Each one is to look at himself.

“I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:27).

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

While one is to be his “brother’s keeper,” too many spend their time looking at someone else and never at

themselves. Some are more interested in the salvation of others than they are their own.

This writer would agree with Woods, who says there are three emphatic lessons taught here.

“(1) the possibility of apostasy; (2) the importance of constant and careful self-examination; (3) the vital necessity of ceaseless vigilance against the blandishment of the evil one” (p. 346).

blandishment — *“to coax with flattery:*

CAJOLE: to use flattery” (Webster).

The most valuable possession one has is in constant danger of being lost if he allows the deceivers of this world to have their way.

King thinks there may be an undercurrent to the thought of John in this context. His words are offered for consideration.

“In this verse, as in the next one also, we hear beneath the words of John the claims of the false teachers ringing in our ears. They claim that they are developing Christianity, that they are expressing it in new and better terms which are more palatable to those of the present generation in Greco-Roman culture, and that they are discovering more truly what it means” (p. 203).

Does this not echo the thoughts of the “change agents” and their community churches?

There is another word which needs some attention in this verse — the word “wrought.”

“wrought” — ἐργάζομαι — *“to toil...commit, do labor for, minister, about trade (by) work”* (Strong); *“to work, labour, do work”* (Thayer).

The context shows that one is to have “wrought” for a

full reward. Here then is another passage which signals a death blow to the *“there is nothing you can do to gain salvation”* crowd. John told them that they were to work so as not to lose what they had been laboring toward. Yet, even then, what he receives is a gift from GOD.

2 John 9 “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not GOD. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”

“Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not GOD: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son.” (ASV)

“transgresseth” — παραβαίνω — *“to go contrary to, i.e., violate a command: transgress”* (Strong); *“to go by the side of...to go past or pass over without touching a thing...to overstep, neglect, violate, transgress...so to go past as to turn aside from...depart, leave, be turned from...one who abandons his trust”* (Thayer); *“to transgress, violate”* (Zodhiates).

John began this letter by discussing love among brethren, and that love among brethren is joyous. Is it possible that these brethren were having a problem with the false teachers because of love? Is it possible that the false teachers (deceivers, antichrist) were not being controlled because of a misguided ‘love’ on the part of the brethren? It seems reasonable that that very well may have been the case. Remember — he talked about love as being joyous, because it is love that abides or has its foundation in the truth.

“Then comes a time whenever love must draw the line. Indeed one may say there is a line

already drawn, beyond which Christian love cannot go” (Gill, p. 159).

Note especially what follows this verse — instructions on how to deal with these deceivers and antichrists. Sometimes people are heard to say, *“We just love them (the transgressors) so much that we cannot discipline them.”* Study of the Scriptures and honesty dictate that such a person does not love the transgressor when such is said. By refusing to issue the correction (discipline) stated by GOD, such a person is actually declaring hatred for the transgressor.

As the word “transgresseth” indicates, these deceivers were those who went beyond the doctrine of Christ, beyond the boundaries GOD had set. They were, and are, what one would call “progressives” (not in a complimentary fashion).

“It has ever been the hallmark of false teachers to claim to be progressive; to possess advanced knowledge; to have a monopoly on scholarship. That which denies Christ as Christ, and so has no God, is no knowledge at all” (Gill, p. 158).

“The false teachers evidently considered themselves ‘advanced thinkers,’ progressing beyond the teaching of Christ; but the apostle here denied pretensions of such men. Whoever advanced beyond the New Testament, has advanced right out of Christianity” (Coffman, p. 489).

“Our aim should not be to advance, but to abide in the doctrine of Christ” (Morris, p. 1272).

“If there is no specific or generic biblical

authority for a thing, then it is a mistake and ought not to be pursued, even though it may seem to lead to progress. If there is no scriptural authority in the form of apostolic command, example, or necessary inference, then it should not be engaged in even though some may describe it as progress. That which is done without divine sanction is never true progress” (King, p. 206).

If one can go beyond the teachings of Christ with GOD’s approval, then the Bible is false, because of the following claim.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of GOD may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

One does not need anything except what GOD has delivered to mankind to be faithful to GOD, gain completion and receive the eternal reward. Those who become progressive do not abide (stay) in the teachings of Christ, they cannot claim to be GOD’s faithful children, and they cannot expect to be recipients of His blessings. Those who are progressive actually deny deity. They may claim to be faithful Christians, and they may have been faithful at one time. However, in their progressive state, they do not belong to Him, and He will not claim them as His own.

“The person who either neglects to teach any part of the doctrine of Christ, or who teaches what is not the doctrine of Christ, is culpable, and does not acknowledge God” (MacKnight, p. 144).

The most common heresy one sees today is when

one thinks he can take from GOD's word anything which does not please him, or what he believes is unnecessary, and eliminate it from his doctrine and practice. Of course therein lies the problem — he follows **his** doctrine instead of the **Lord's** doctrine. Further, one should not forget those who believe that since **they** like something, then surely GOD will like it, even if GOD has not put His stamp of approval on that thing.

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, GOD shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, GOD shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (The Revelation 22:18-19).

Is it a wonder that the Reader's Digest Condensed Version of the Bible removed the above verses?

“In a practical sense of course, this limits authority in the Christian religion to the teachings of the New Testament, because there and there alone may be found the authentic truth ‘first spoken by the Lord,’ and delivered unto us ‘by them that heard him’” (Coffman, p. 490).

What one must be doing is **REMAINING IN** the doctrine of Christ, where all spiritual blessings are found.

“According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3).

One must put all of his efforts into being faithful to the

doctrine of Christ and refusing to go beyond it. One must remain inside the boundary line Christ has drawn — never trying to expand or diminish that boundary.

2 John 10 “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him GOD speed:”

“If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting.” (ASV)

At this verse the masses cry — *“How cruel, how cruel!!!”* It would be, except for the context and the salvation or lack thereof which is involved. Who is not to be shown hospitality? Who is it to whom one must not give greeting or any appearance of endorsement? The context shows that it is the false teacher — deceivers and antichrists.

“He may claim to be a brother; but no difference, give him no welcome as such, extend to him no hospitality; and further, extend to him no wish for his success, and no arrangement in his work of deception. In short, such are not to be fellowshipped in any manner by the brethren” (Canton, p. 185).

With such a clear warning, Why are some so reluctant to obey this part of GOD’s word? It is because they do not truly understand, or comprehend, the danger posed by the false teacher. What they perceive in themselves as a spirit of love and kindness is truly softness, sinful tolerance, and a lack of backbone against sin. One must not forget that this passage is talking about false teachers who offer a false and damnable doctrine which will cause those who accept

it to lose their souls. This passage does not deal with an unbeliever, the deceived, or the person honestly seeking salvation. This passage deals with those who are hardened in their opposition to Christ and His doctrine. It deals with those who purposely deceive the simple, the uninformed, et cetera.

“Such reluctance, however, is due to gross failure to understand, either the destructive and murderous results of false teaching, or the evil nature of false teachers. The men in view by the apostle here were immoral, self-seeking hypocrites, true children of the Devil, deserving fully the treatment prescribed for them by the apostle John” (Coffman, p. 491).

Some would like to make a distinction with regard to the word “house.” Some believe this means one’s dwelling place, while others believe it means the place where the congregation meets. **What difference does it make where this is?** These men are to be denied fellowship with the saints, and that would mean **anywhere**. They are to be denied any action which might possibly be considered as an endorsement of them or the positions they hold. One must not give these people the chance to deceive him further or anyone else. One must not give the slightest appearance of sanctioning their teachings.

For the Lord’s people to extend a false teacher housing, approval, or recommendation would be the same as presiding over their own execution.

“The greeting was ‘chairo!’ literally, goodspeed or Godspeed. This greeting was more than mere formality; it was an approval of the course being pursued by the one thus greeting, and included a desire for success in the effort

attempted" (Woods, p. 349).

"GOD speed" — χαίρω — *"be well: farewell, be lad, God speed, greeting, hail, joy, rejoice"* (Strong); *"to rejoice, be glad...to rejoice exceedingly...to be well, thrive...in salutations, hail...at the beginning of letters; to give one greeting, salute"* (Thayer); *"To rejoice, be glad"* (Zodhiates).

Bauer says it expresses the idea of being glad to see someone. Why would anyone be glad to see a false teacher or give him the opportunity to spread his false doctrine?

2 John 11 "For he that biddeth him GOD speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

"for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works."
(ASV)

This verse is an extension of verse ten and shows why no greeting, no hospitality, is to be given to the false teacher. If one extends greeting to him, he becomes a participant of, guilty of, the false teacher's evil deeds — his sins. One becomes guilty of rejoicing with them in their work and their unholy goals.

"(1) John does not here forbid hospitality to strangers, or, for that matter, to false teachers when, in so doing, false teaching is neither encouraged or done. Were we to find a teacher known to be an advocate of false doctrine suffering, it would be our duty to minister to his need, provided that in so doing we did not abet or encourage him in the propagation of false doctrine. (2) What is forbidden is the reception

of such teachers in a fashion as to supply them with an opportunity to teach their tenets, to maintain an association with them when such would involve us in the danger of accepting their doctrines. The passage teaches that we must do nothing that would in any way support or encourage the teaching of that which is not true” (Woods, p. 349).

What Woods said fits well with the teachings of the New Testament.

“Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22).

“have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:11).

One must be careful that Paul's charge against the unbelieving in Rome may never be said about himself regarding false teachers.

“Who knowing the judgment of GOD, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Romans 1:32).

“pleasure” — συνευδοκέω — *“to think well of in common, i.e., assent to, feel gratified with”* (Strong); *“to be pleased together with, to approve together...to be pleased at the same time with, consent, agree to”* (Thayer); *“to take pleasure with others, hence, to approve, assent to”* (Zodhiates).

Christians must heed the words of Jesus.

“Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the

ditch” (Matthew 15:14).

“Hospitality and friendship extended to known enemies of the truth is a violation of our Lord’s word” (Coffman, p. 492).

How many young Christians, not realizing the slyness of Satan and his servants, failing to realize his deceptive nature — which sometimes deceives the mature Christian — have violated this prohibition only to be lost to a false doctrine? How many maturing, older Christians have lost their influence and some of the stiffness of their spiritual backbone in the cause of Christ — because of their association with known false teachers?

“Do not be deceived: evil company corrupts good habits” (1 Corinthians 15:33 – NKJV).

“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the Devil; for the Devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of GOD was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the Devil” (1 John 3:7-8, emphasis mine, RK).

Fellowship (joint participation) with the deceivers and antichrists shows approval of them and their false doctrines. But notice — John shows that showing them hospitality does the same thing. Hospitality is a form of fellowship. But *“I do not want to be rude or ugly.”* One does not have to be rude or ugly to refuse fellowship with a false teacher. One can be perfectly civil in doing so.

Today, it is common for some congregations to invite a known false teacher to hold a meeting for them. When confronted regarding his false teachings, they are

often heard trying to justify their invitation by making comments like, “*He did not teach, or will not teach, any false doctrine while he was/is here.*” **That is the spineless drivel of a compromiser!** Such congregations’ leaders are guilty of encouraging a false teacher and are joining him in his sins.

2 John 12 “Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.”

“Having many things to write unto you, I would not write them with paper and ink: but I hope to come unto you, and to speak face to face, that your joy may be made full.”
(ASV)

John told the “elect lady” that he had a number of things he wished to say to her, but he was not going to put them on paper. Most recognize that there are any number of benefits in speaking to someone versus writing to him. Writing is not as personal as speaking directly to one. Further, personal conversation allows one to see the reaction to his words and also allows immediate answers to questions which might arise from what has been said. Personal conversation allows one to see the expressions of the speaker and hear the tone of his voice, both of which can express many different ideas. Also, if there is any misunderstanding, it can immediately be cleared up.

“Paper, as that term is now understood, was not invented until long after this period. The material designated by the word John used (chartes) was the Egyptian papyrus, and the particular thing denoted was a leaf made out of that plant. The sheets were made from

membranes of the plant closely pressed together...The ink which was commonly employed in writing was made of soot and water, with a mixture of some species of gum to give it consistency and durability. The instrument or pen was made of a reed” (Barnes, p. 366).

John expressed his hope of visiting soon. Coffman may be right in suggesting that one of the purposes of this short epistle was to let them know that he was coming. At any rate, this epistle dealt with the most pressing matter at hand, leaving all others to be dealt with at a later date.

“‘Face to face’ is literally ‘mouth to mouth’ (stoma pro stoma), a phrase also occurring in 3 John 14, and indicating personal presence and conversation” (Woods, p. 350).

2 John 13 “The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.”

“The children of thine elect sister salute thee.” (ASV)

The identity of the “elect sister” of this passage is unknown. Was this a physical sister or a sister in Christ? It is this author’s belief that in referring to her as an “elect sister,” it was probably a sister in Christ.

The important things regarding this letter are the (1) admonition to abide in the doctrine of Christ, (2) moving forward, (3) growing in the faith, and (4) the proper response to the enemies of truth — the enemies of Christ.