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SECOND AND THIRD JOHN

We're going to try to cover the high spots of both **2 John** and **3 John** today so that we will have two weeks for the little **Book of Jude**. So please listen fast and I'm going to do my best to get us out on time.

2 John:1-3...

There are several different opinions held by different Bible scholars about the recipient of this little letter.

~ Some folks say John is writing to a **particular church** and that he used "the chosen lady and her children" as code names. There was much persecution of Christians at the time John wrote this and some theologians believe this was not a lady but a church and the "children" were the members of that church.

~ Some folks believe it was written to the **New Testament churches in general**.

~ More than likely however...John was really writing to **an actual lady**...perhaps the lady was allowing the church to meet in her home. The children mentioned were probably her own children.

If it's true that John wrote this letter to a real lady, then it is the only book of Scripture specifically addressed to a woman.

John used the word "truth" eleven times in **2 and 3 John**...so the three points of our lesson today are

- 1) We Must Know the Truth**
- 2) We Must Walk in Truth**
- 3) We Must Abide in Truth**

1) We Must Know Truth

Before we can **walk in truth** and **abide in truth**, we must **know truth** and that's what we see in these first three verses.

God's Word makes it very clear to us what truth is...Jesus Christ said, "I am Truth..." Also, God's Word is Truth. Also, God has given us "the Spirit of Truth."

When you think about it...we can know truth up here (our head), but I believe John is teaching us a deeper level of truth. I believe John wants the believer life to be completely controlled by truth.

See, there were false teachers abroad during John's day as there are today. John deeply wanted the folks of his day and ours to know truth from error.

It's amazing that folks will go to great lengths to find the truth about many subjects.

For instance...if you **sew**, you're going to find out exactly how a garment is supposed to be put together, aren't you?

If you **quilt or smock or crochet or knit**, you're not going to do any of these things without first learning how.

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If you **make a cake**, you're going to find out the proper ingredients and oven temperature and cooking time, aren't you?

If you **operate a computer**, you won't operate it very long before you realize that you must click on the right icons and symbols and words or you won't be able to accomplish a thing.

In other words, we must do our homework and know about these things before we can do things correctly.

But many people will believe **any old sermon, any old Sunday School lesson, any old Bible Study teaching** because they haven't done their homework...and they don't know the truth about these things.

Example: Bill's mother and "soul sleep"...

And, Beloved, in this day and age...you and I are absolutely without excuse in this department...

God has blessed us with so many great Bible helps. I have on my bookshelves at home several Study Bibles in different versions...I have a Ryrie Study Bible, an NIV Study Bible, a John MacArthur Study Bible, a Women's Study Bible, an Insight for Living Study Bible, an International Inductive Study Bible, an Experiencing God Study Bible, a Life Application Bible, a Scofield and numerous commentaries and theology books.

Now, I said all that to simply say this. Maybe you don't have that many...maybe you have more...but I want to say this to you...

God isn't impressed or even interested in how many books and Bibles we have on our shelves...**God is interested in whether we know truth and then if we apply that truth to our everyday lives.**

Do you know the essentials...the fundamentals of our faith? Well, you should. That's why I've given that sheet to you. You should learn them and to be on the safe side it wouldn't hurt to write them in the back of your Bible. These essentials should be your plumbline when you hear a sermon preached or a lesson taught.

If our homes and our families and our churches are to be true to Christ and if we're going to resist and oppose false teaching we must know the truth. And, to know it, we must discipline ourselves to read God's Word.

I love a good book! I love a good novel...a good mystery...not trash, but a good clean book. And I don't believe God really minds if we read "for fun." But, "for fun" reading should never take the place of reading God's Word. Even reading commentaries and theology and Christian help books should not take the place of reading God's Word.

To know truth for ourselves...we **must** read God's Word...then and only then will we know truth. What did Jesus say knowing truth would do? **It would make us free!!**

And let me just say this with all the love I can...if you're not reading God's Word on a regular basis...**shame on you!!**

Well, once we know God's truth, **then** what?

2) We Must Walk in Truth

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What does it mean to walk in truth? It simply means to obey truth. When the Bible speaks of "walking" it means your lifestyle, your daily behavior as a believer.

Some years back a friend asked me to do a piece of calligraphy for her classroom. It was **3 John 4...**

"I have no greater joy that to hear my children walking in truth..."

I don't believe there's a mother in this class who would not embrace this verse.

The prayer of my heart is that my children will walk in truth. Nothing, **absolutely nothing** would give me greater joy than for my children to walk in truth.

And if **I** feel this way and if **you** feel this way...and if **John** felt this way...how much more must our **Heavenly Father** feel this way?

So, with that mind...let's just think about this truth. There are many truths found in Scripture, and as we've said before, John's emphasis has primarily been on three truths.

He has emphasized **righteousness**.

He has emphasized **love**.

He has emphasized **sound doctrine**.

In this context, John is exhorting the lady of **2 John** to **walk** in the truth of **love** and he is commending Gaius of **3 John** because he **is walking** in the truth of love...and we'll see more about Gaius in just a few minutes.

2 John 4-6...

Isn't it amazing that God has to command Christians to love one another? Wouldn't it be nice if we just loved each other automatically? Without effort? Well, we don't, but I do want to say this...

Love indeed covers a multitude of sins...and I have seen the Holy Spirit create close friendships where there was once suspicion and accusation and even threats.

I told you a good while back about a man who lives down the road from us in Arkansas. He wanted to bushhog our pasture so he could use the hay for his cattle. However, he didn't do all that he said he would do, and after my husband had called him several times to get it done without success. Finally he called him and asked him to just get his equipment off our pasture so we could get someone to come and do the necessary bushhogging.

Well, the man didn't like that and he threatened my husband's life...

Several weeks later we went back up to Arkansas and this man came over and apologized to him...He had been going through a really tough time with his wife. She had had a nervous breakdown and had had to be hospitalized. He told us that he was a Christian and really did not mean all those things he had said...

And the next thing I knew he and my husband were out mending fences literally, together. They were out together stringing barbed wire.

Now, this story is true and the bottom line of it is that these two men were walking in the truth of the love of God...the love the Holy Spirit put in each of their hearts.

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My husband and I were watching one of the game shows this past week, and one of the answers had to do with the children's book **The Velveteen Rabbit**. Have you read it? The question had to do with what did love do for the velveteen rabbit. **The answer is that love made him real!!**

And love does the same for us. And it works both ways. When someone loves us and when we love someone!!

Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples... if you love one another."

As we said, John commends Gaius for extending hospitality to the brethren... **3 John 5-8...**

There weren't any Holiday Inns in those days, and Gaius apparently allowed preachers to stay in his home as an act of love and hospitality.

There are many ways we can walk in truth – in the truth of God's love. Real love is always an **act of the will**. It's always a **choice**. **I must choose to love you and you must choose to love me!!**

And, when we make that choice we have chosen to walk in truth.

So, we must know truth, and we must walk in truth...

Also,

3) We Must Abide in the Truth

By the way, what is the difference in walking in the truth and abiding in the truth. Basically, **walking in the truth** is what **we do**, and **abiding in the truth** is what **we are**. Walking in the truth is **outward** and abiding in the truth is **inward**.

2 John 7-9...

John turns from encouraging walking in the truth of love to warning against error...against deceivers...against false teachers.

Where did these false teachers come from? "...out into the world..." They went out from the church!!

1 John 2:19 puts it this way... "They went out from us because they were not of us..."

See, if a person is not walking in truth and not abiding in truth, then soon he'll show himself for what he really is.

Look at a man named Diotrephes in **3 John 9-10...**

This man refused to listen to the sound doctrine John taught.

There are so many like Diotrephes today. Turn on the television and you'll see all kinds of folks who are teaching and preaching heresy. **They look good. They look like they know truth. They even sound like they know truth.**

But if you really listen...if you know truth and you really **listen** to what they're saying, you'll know they're teaching false doctrine.

My husband and I were watching TV Sunday afternoon and saw Rod Parsley on one of the channels. Oh, he had his audience spellbound! And the place was packed...and he was using

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the name of Jesus, and he **looked** good and he **sounded** good, but **he wasn't walking in truth**...nor was he **abiding** in truth nor was he **preaching** truth.

This is why you must know the essentials of the faith.

This is why you must know God's Word and this is why you must use spiritual discernment when you hear any preacher or teacher! And stay away from such folks!! I heard Ron Dunn say this past week that we should all desire and pray for the spirit of discernment!!

2 John 10-11...

We've all heard our doorbells ring and when we've gone to the door, we've found someone standing there armed with literature or magazines or books. If we were to look at this stuff, it would all seem so good and so solid and so sound that we just might listen, and if we listened, we just might go hear one of their preachers, and if we did that we just might fall for their version of the truth!

What did John say? **Verses 10-11...**
Why was he so adamant about this?

I believe there are at least three reasons...

- 1) He didn't want us to give a false teacher the impression that his doctrine of heresy was even remotely acceptable.
- 2) He didn't want us to become infected and defiled even by association and possible friendship with these folks.
- 3) He didn't want to give the false teachers ammunition to use at the next place he stopped. In other words, my disobedience could very well lead to somebody else's destruction.

John isn't saying to never entertain unbelievers in your home. John is simply saying **not to receive or encourage false teachers who represent antichristian groups**...people who are trying to seduce others away from the truth.

I believe it was about two years ago that our pastor's very good friend over in Chattanooga invited Rod Parsley to his church to lead a revival. He called his friend and begged him to rescind the invitation. His friend did not do so...he allowed Rod Parsley to come and hold that revival and in that revival his friend and his wife went down front and were "slain in the Spirit" in front of their congregation. Do you see what this means? Do you see the example they set? Also, this was on television!! Think of the folks they influenced!!

Now, that church has gone into emotionalism and has become charismatic to the extreme. I don't know if any folks left...but I do know that happened to a precious little church down in Louisiana. I've told you before about this dear friend of ours who is pastoring the church where my husband grew up down in Monroe. He began to go to Pensacola, and he bought into the entire Brownsville revival scene...even came back and sent some of the members of his church down there. This led to his cutting back on his sermons and they just had praise sessions...and this led to a church split!!

That's why John is being so rigid in this...He wants us to be protected!!

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Let me just say this...I'm so grateful that we have a pastor who screens folks who are coming to speak to us...and he doesn't allow anyone to stand behind that sacred desk who would lead us astray.

Beloved, I hope you're getting the message loud and clear...**we are held accountable to walk in and abide in truth.**

Look over at **verse 11 of 3 John...**

I believe this sums up and puts in a nutshell how we are to live as Christians. What simple statements, but what profound instructions!

3 John 12...

We don't know anything else about this man, Demitrius, do we? But what John is saying to us is that Demitrius is an example for us to follow.

Wouldn't you love to have just one little verse of Scripture that said,
"You have received a good testimony from everyone
and from the truth itself."

Is it right to imitate humans? Yes, if they in turn are imitating Christ. Time and again, Paul urged folks **to imitate him...to follow him.**

See, you and I cannot see God, but we can see God at work in the lives of His children. Demitrius was a man whose life showed forth Jesus.

He not only had a good report from his fellow believers, he also had a good report from the Word... "Thy Word is truth..."

Demitrius walked in truth...Gauis walked in truth...

When God's people...when the members of our Sunday School Class **to know truth and walk in truth and abide in truth and love Jesus and love each other**, then the Spirit of God will do a great work through us...**we will receive a good testimony from all believers and from the truth itself.**

May it be said of all of us that we walk and abide in truth!!

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I hope the little letters of John have blessed your heart. You can almost see John putting down his pen as he says in **3 John 13-14**: "I had many things to write you, but I hope to come to see you soon..."

He has written these little epistles with all the fervor of his soul for one purpose...**to encourage God's people then and now**

**to walk in the truth of love...  
to walk in the truth of righteousness...  
and to walk in the truth of sound doctrine!!**

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