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B0432 -- August 8, 2004 -- 2 John 4-6 -- Loving in the Sphere of Truth

Last week ,we looked at the introduction, purpose, author, recipients, destination, and date of the book of 2nd John. It's a short book, much smaller than 1 John but a very potent epistle, giving the proper perspective on 1 John. Remember 1 John stresses "love" as we've already found as we study that book, but will find further in 1 John 4. 2nd John stresses the boundaries for "love" which are truth. Truth we will find is always a higher prerogative over love. This is, of course, a radical idea, in Christianity today, but it is absolutely critical that 2nd John be taught today in local churches because of the downplay of truth and the increase in unity and pseudo-Christian love.

v. 1 revealed to us the author, given the title *the elder*, which refers to John the apostle under a title that his audience would identify. Second, the recipients were an *elect lady and her children*. This refers to a specific unnamed lady who was widowed, had children, and whose home was used to hold church services. She may have lived in Ephesus but this is unclear. The situation in the book is similar to that of 1 John and since 1 John reveals to us that the false teachers departed from the apostles in Jerusalem (1 John 2:19) then both 1st and 2nd John were written about the same time, AD62. They were clearly coming into contact with false teachers as demonstrated by 2nd John 7. John says he loves her *in truth*, that is, in the sphere of truth. Christian love takes place within the confines of truth and never outside of truth. And not only did John love her but *all who know the truth*. Perfect tense, advanced believers who knew this lady and her children loved her. All advanced and advancing believers love to see other believers growing in doctrinal knowledge and walking according to that knowledge. Putting the teachings of Christ to the streets. It's a joy and obviously John was quite impressed as we'll see today.

v. 2 John gives the reason why they love her, they love her *because of the truth*. The truth tells us to *love one another* (John 13:34) and by doing so we show the world that we are disciples of Christ (John 13:35). These advanced believers are doing what they do so well, they are voicing their love for other believers. Then John makes a prophetic announcement, He says that the *truth will be with us forever. the truth* can be taken two ways here: *first*,

it may refer to the Scripture as truth. In that sense the truth will never depart from believers. The word of God is truth and it is a living and active book that will never depart from us. The word of God is as eternal as God himself because it is His word. It will never pass away (Heb. 4:12). *Second*, it may refer to the Spirit as truth. We are told in 1 John 5:6 that the *Spirit is the truth*. If this is true then this verse is an assurance of eternal security because the *Spirit will be with us forever*. It's difficult to say, but the *truth* here is either the word of God or the Holy Spirit.

v. 3 John gives the greeting and begins with *Grace, mercy, and peace*. Grace is God's unmerited favor, mercy His kindness coupled with a desire to relieve the afflicted, and peace the result of being bound together with Christ. Each finds its source in *both* the Father and the Son. The Father and the Son are co-equals, co-eternal, co-substantial but distinct persons of the Godhead. This too is a prophetic word because John says that *grace, mercy and peace shall be with us*; they will not depart from us in any sense ever. This is because the source of the *grace, mercy and peace* are eternal. God in His triune being is eternal. The fact that the Father and the Son are mentioned may be support for the *truth* in v. 2 being a reference to the Holy Spirit. If it is then the Triunity of God is taught in 2nd John. As the Triunity of God is our possession, so also are the *grace, mercy and peace* that find their source in the Triunity of God. John adds that these blessings fall within the sphere of *truth and love*. Christian *grace, mercy, and peace* are not just concepts, they are real pleasures we enjoy as they pour forth from the Father and Son. Anything that finds its source in the Father and the Son are undoubtedly in the sphere of *truth and love*. Notice, *truth* comes first, as usual in John when the two are listed. Why? Because *truth* is a higher priority. Only as long as we remain in the sphere of truth and love will we enjoy God's *grace, mercy and peace*. Now, today we turn to the first of two Exhortations in 2nd John; "Loving in the Sphere of Truth" (4-6) and "Abiding in the Teaching of Christ" (7-11).

II. Exhortation (4-11)

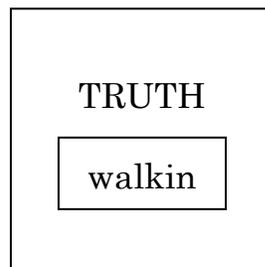
The primary thrust of the body of this letter revolves around Christian love, its relation to truth and the application of this relationship to false teachers.

A. Loving in the Sphere of Truth (4-6)

1.4 I was exceedingly glad that I find out of your children ones that are walking in truth, just as we received commandment from the Father.

1:4 VEca,rhn li,an o[ti eu[rhka evk tw/n te,knwn sou peripatou/ntaj evn avlhqei,a|(kaqw.j evntolh.n evla,bomen para. tou/ patro,jÅ

John is extremely glad to find some children walking in truth. The word for *find* is *eureka*, a popular expression today, which means “I’ve found it!” John had found it! What had he found? In a spiritually degenerate Christian culture, much like today, John had found children walking in the truth. This was so atypical that he expresses great joy and surprise in finding this! John’s finding the children of the *elect lady* walking in the truth is analogous to finding something precious that was once lost. Apparently what John saw in these children’s lives was the stimulus for his writing the epistle to their mother to tell her the good news. On the other side of the coin, what joy this must have brought to a parent to discover that their child was walking according to the godly principles they were raised on even when away from home! Too often children leave their Christian upbringing and embrace the world culture and thinking patterns. Thus, John’s note of their behavior in the letter would have brought great joy to any mother! John picks up the fact that her children were *walking in truth* and uses it to give us the boundaries of the model Christian walk.



The word for walking is *peripateo* and refers to “one’s daily conduct, how one goes about living day by day”. The Christian is to go about his life walking inside the boundaries of truth. These children were walking consistently with Divine View Point (DVP). While most young Christians John knew were walking outside the truth, according to the world system (i.e., carnality), these children were walking inside the truth (i.e., fellowship). A testimony so powerful that John wrote this letter in response to it! This just goes to show that salvation is not the end of the Christian life, it is only the beginning. John had a great concern for fulfilling the Great Commission of Matt. 28:19-20. There Christians are told to *go and make disciples...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you*. Obviously, John got excited when he saw the Great Commission being fulfilled in these young disciples who were observing the commandments. The things the children related to John in their short visit stimulated the content for this short epistle (vs. 4-11). The commandment John is referring to here, which is revealed in the following verses is the commandment *to love one another* (John 13:34). Jesus was the one who gave this commandment but John says it was the *commandment from the Father*. How do we reconcile this? Turn to John 8:28; 5:19. The Son only spoke that which the Father teaches

Him. He never said anything of His own accord. Thus, whatever the Son said was originally said by the Father. Thus, it can be said that the commandment *to love one another* came from the Father.

1.5 And now I urge you, lady, not about a new commandment that is written to you but one we have had from the beginning, that we love each other.

1.5 kai. nu/n evrwtw/ se(kuri,a(ouvc w`j evntolh.n kainh.n gra,fwn soi avlla. h]n ei;comen avpV avrch/j(i[na avgapw/men avllh,loujÅ

Even though John was very pleased with finding these children walking in the truth he still urges them strongly to keep the commandment to *love each other*. As we found in 1 John 2:7-8 this commandment is not new in quality (*kainos*, cf. Matt. 9:17 contrast with *neos*). In fact, the command to love one another was an ancient commandment first given in Leviticus 19:18. Then Christ gave it in John 13:34. Jesus said it was a *new commandment* because He displayed it in a fresh way as He loved His apostles. John says that this commandment is not *new* but is one they *have had from the beginning*. Why does John emphasize that the commandment is not new? Because the Revisionists might be adding to this commandment or changing the meaning of the command as it was originally given. John says, nothing has been added, nothing has been changed. When we studied 1 John 2:6-8 we learned how false teachers deceive us. Let's review the basic principles of deception. How are we deceived by false teachers? There are two basic ways we are deceived.

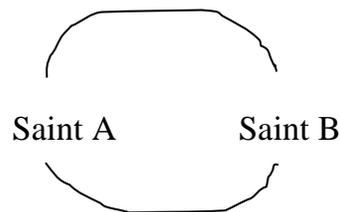
First, people add new ideas to the old established teachings. They continue to teach the old teachings but they just add new ideas. This ultimately changes the original message. What if we had a Revelation 23? Would that change the overall message? Human nature wants to be unique; we want to get recognition for some new idea. Historically it has been very difficult for students to not go beyond their teachers. Historically the students want to push what their teachers taught just a little further (it is enough that a disciple be like his teacher (Matt. 10:25)). This is not always bad but when it goes beyond Scripture it is bad. The result is the adding of new ideas to old teachings. The *antichrists* in 2nd John may have been adding something to the old commandment and John is countering that saying "there is nothing more"! If the Revisionists departed from Jerusalem then they could make the strong claim of being with the apostles themselves and that this additional teaching came from the apostles. John is saying directly to his readers that this is not true. Nothing has been added to the old commandment. The commandment stands as you originally heard it when you first believed in Christ.

A *second* way deception takes place is through people who give new meanings to words. A few Christian groups (primarily seminaries) are committed to very precise doctrinal statements. Those who seek to re-interpret these precise doctrinal statements by giving the words new meanings are what we call “Progressives”. They do this to deceive people into thinking they are the same good old boys but at the same time so they can promote their “new theology”. This is very satanic. This is Postmodernism being applied to language; postmodernism says that language is simply a social construct and can be manipulated to promote the individual’s agenda. This is pure deception. Words have specific meanings in given contexts. You cannot simply read your meaning into another author’s words. Many unbelievers and most believers today are deceived into this type of thinking. This is exactly what the *antichrists* in 2nd John were doing. They were changing or giving new meanings to the core truths of Christianity (cf. 2 John 7).

So, the commandment is the same, to *love one another*. And we know that we make fresh this commandment day by day as we follow the commandment. When was this commandment given to the author and his readers? John says they have had it *from the beginning*. Four explanations have been given: First, the beginning is creation since other passages use the phrase this way (e.g., John 1:1). Second, some have taught that this beginning is the beginning of Jesus’ ministry at His baptism by John (Matt. 3:13-17). Third, some say this is the beginning of the Christian Church on Pentecost (Acts 2). Fourth, some say this is the beginning of Christian experience for each believer since this is one of the commands that should be given to new believers. The fourth option is the best. The command to *love each other* is a command that all new believers should be taught. They should be taught that the boundaries of *loving each other* are found in the word of God which is truth. So, in order to *love each other* they will be spurred on to searching the Scriptures and learning the truth so they can *love each other*. John is not concerned, in any of his writings, with loving unbelievers. Now, I don’t exactly know why, but it is a fact. This may stun you but I did a word study of the verb *agapao* and it is used 143 times in the NT. 72 times by John. That’s 50% of the uses and not once, not a single time is it used of Christians loving unbelievers. That is a stunning observation. I read every single passage where *agapao* is used and not once is it used in John’s writings of a Christian loving an unbeliever. Now, it may be used that way in two Messianic Kingdom passages but it is not used by John that way ever. What I can tell you is that John is interested in believers loving other believers so that two results take place: *first*, evangelizing the lost by missionary support (3 John 5-8) and *second*, demonstrating the love of Christ to the world (John 13:35). When we do *love one another*, we demonstrate that we are spiritually seasoned believers and we have an effective life witness to the world. *loving one another* is the

touchstone of a knowledgeable believer who has a growing relationship with the Lord via continual prayer and study of the word.

love is present active subjunctive of *agapao*, emphasizing a continual loving of each other. This is how Jesus loved His disciples and this is how we ought to love other believers, continually. The degree to which a Christian can love another Christian is proportional to the amount of known truth. The more of God's truth is known the more a Christian will know God's general will for other believer's lives and will impart that through teaching and prayer for his fellow Christians. The reason (*agapao*) love is strictly between believers in John's epistles and does not to extend to the outside world, is so that the world may observe the fantastic effects of *agapao* love between believers. John wants Christians to be set apart, distinct in their relationships so that the world can see the Body of Christ operate as a distinct entity. Only when we are seen as distinct (in the biblical sense) are we witnessing to the world. Other scriptures warn us not to love (*agapao*) the world or things of the world (1 John 2:15). The phrase "**each other**" is a reciprocal pronoun indicating that if Saint A loves Saint B, then Saint B should return that love to Saint A.

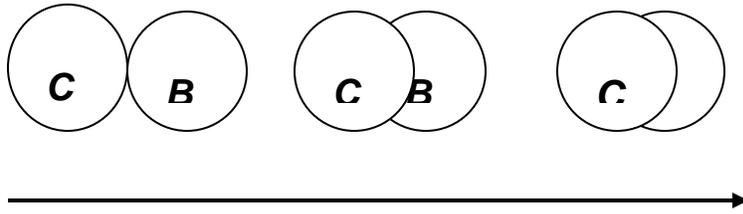


1.6 And this is the love, that we walk according to His commandments: this is the commandment you heard from the beginning, that in it you should walk.

1.6 kai. au[th evsti.n h` avga,ph(i[na peripathw/men kata. ta.j evtola.j aurtou\ au[th h` evtolh, evstin(kaqw.j hvkou,sate avpV avrch/j(i[na evn aurtou/| peripath/teÅ

What is love? v. 6 defines biblical love; to **walk according to His commandments**. What this means is to walk according to the truth, to walk in accordance with the divine viewpoint mentality. This is the truth translated into life. This is walking the streets of daily life in terms of the truth which requires a change in our thinking (Rom. 12:2). In today's culture we need to understand what biblical love is because it has so many wrong connotations in our society. It gets all mushy. Biblical love is something most Christians don't want to think about because biblical love incorporates "obedience". "Loyalty" is a good way to encapsulate what God means by "love". Running up and down the streets yelling Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, jumping up and down, running down church aisles, barking, weeping, none

of this yahoo demonstrates that one loves Christ or others. And this stuff goes on under the banner of Christianity all the time. It's going on right now across our nation, probably in Fredericksburg, TX, I guarantee it! This is what passes as Christianity and this kind of behavior is what makes it so difficult in our times to be an effective witness for Christ. Because the world sees Benny Hinn and all the other mumbo jumbo out there and that is their perception of Christianity. Benny Hinn is not helping, he's hurting Christianity because he makes it more difficult to present a clear gospel message to non-Christians. Christianity is not marked by hoopla, it's not marked by its ability to help people stop drinking, stop smoking, and all that. Now, think about this...anyone can cry, run down aisles, jump up and down, quit drinking, quite smoking, etc. It requires no knowledge of God to do any of those things. Many unbelievers do these things all the time. It is clear that none of this has anything to do with God's commandments. So, the Bible is clear about the fact that God never asks us to do anything before having knowledge about Him. First, we have to know, we have to have reasons before He ever asks us to do anything in the Christian life. Christianity is about content. So, even though the children are walking in the truth John is urging them not to set aside what they have heard, but to continue to walk in it. You cannot love another believer if you are not concerned for him and especially for his spiritual welfare. You cannot love someone if you are not following the commandments of Christ. "Christian love is defined in terms of obedience to God" (Hodges). To seek the best for a brother or sister can only be done by obeying what God has commanded. Love undirected by God's commandments can easily result in mere sentimentalism or humanistic love which stems from selfish motivations. The Greek uses the preposition *kata* which is translated "**according to**" and literally means "down". *kata* with the accusative always denotes the standard or measure. Therefore, it means that the standard by which we are to walk is ***His commandments***. We are to be "dominated by the commandments of God". The commandments of God are to hold down our behavior. The level of domination is related to the two dimensions of sanctification: The Existential Present and Long-Term Growth. As we spend more time in fellowship with God (Existential Present) we are able to assimilate Bible doctrine more and more so that we increase in knowledge of the commandments of God and move toward maturity (Long-Term Growth). Thus, over the Long-Term we will increasingly walk as this elect lady and her children, under domination by the commandments of God. We cannot alter the command to "love one another in the sphere of truth". For example, many today are establishing gay and lesbian churches and/or the ordination of gays and lesbians under the name of Christian love. This is simply anti-biblical. It is changing the commandment God as originally prescribed so that we can push our own agenda and doing it under the banner of 'Christian'. It's not Christian and it's not obeying the command of God. It's making the Bible a rubber bible. We can stretch it however we want. We are gods. We have the final say.

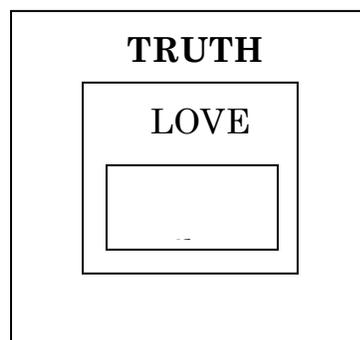


Sanctification Phase 2: Long-Term Growth

C = commandments of God

B = behavior of believer

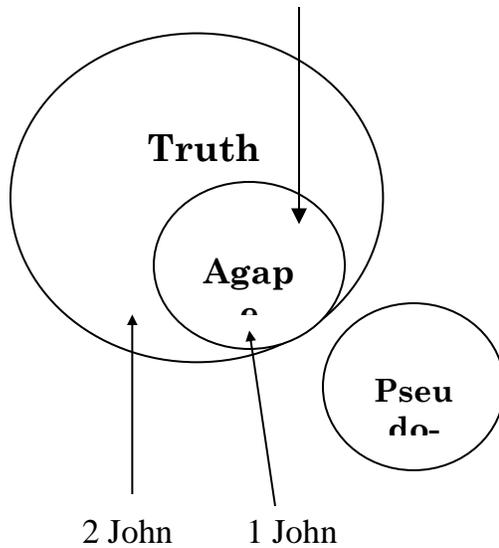
The bottom line of the passage to this point is this. John wants us to get to this final product of walking, but there are careful and narrow boundaries within which this walk must take place. The greatest sphere is truth, within that is love, and within that is where we walk. If we do not have the truth in us, we can't be walking in the truth, if we have any other kind of love than that which is in the sphere of truth then we are not loving, and if we are walking outside of the truth or love we are not walking according to the commandments of God. The more truth one knows the larger area over which he can properly love Christian brethren and likewise the area over which he can walk in faith is broadened (Rom. 14:23).



Thus, the relationship between 1 John and 2 John is this. 1 John teaches about “love” and 2 John teaches about “protecting the truth”. There is speaking truth that is not in love (Eph. 4:15) and there is acting in humanistic love outside of the truth. Both speaking truth in a manner inconsistent with the truth itself or loving someone from a humanistic motive (outside of the truth) are anti-Christian principles and have no place in the Christian life.

What John wants us to do is to understand and live according to this relationship between truth and love:

you should operate in this sphere



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