

# LOVE IN TRUTH

## 2 John 1-3

### INTRODUCTION

Beloved, let me begin with a Quiz. What is the **longest book in the Bible?**

#### In English

- 1) Psalms (43,743 words)
- 2) Jeremiah (42,659 words)
- 3) Exekiel (39,407 words)

#### In Hebrew

- 1) Jeremiah (33,002 words)
- 2) Genesis (32,046 words)
- 3) Psalms (30,147 words)

**Shortest books in the Bible?** There are 5 one-chapter books.

#### By verses

- 1) 2 John – 13 verses
- 2) 3 John – 14 verses
- 3) Obadiah – 21 verses
- 4) Philemon – 25 verses
- 5) Jude – 25 verses

#### By words (in English)

- 1) 3 John (299 words)
- 2) 2 John (303 words)
- 3) Philemon (445 words)
- 4) Jude (613 words)
- 5) Obadiah (670 words)

In Greek/Hebrew, Jude and Obadiah would swap places.

Since there weren't verse divisions in the original ...

**Shortest verse in the Bible?** I'll give you a clue ... it's not **John 11:35** – “Jesus wept.” ☺

That is not even the shortest verse in the New Testament – in the original languages. ☺

That would be 1 Thess 5:16-17 in Greek; Job 3:2 in Hebrew.

Well ... please open your Bibles to the 2<sup>nd</sup> shortest book in the Bible → **2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle of the Apostle John**

**2 John** and **3 John** are the shortest books in the Bible

– each could be contained on a single sheet of papyrus.

**Purpose** – Similar themes to 1 John – Truth, Love, and Obedience  
→ John will call us to love. John will call us to love. He will call us to obedience. And he will call us to **hospitality**.

This is not the first time we see God’s charge to His children regarding hospitality:

**1 Tim 3:2** and **Tit 1:8** – mark **hospitality** as a *sine qua non* requirement for an **elder**

**1 Tim 5:10** – also a requirement for a “**widow** indeed”

**Rom 12:13** – lists as a commanded virtue for **all believers**

**Heb 13:2** – tells us to, “show hospitality to **strangers**, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it”

**1 Pet 4:9** – instructs us to, “be hospitable ... without complaint”

In ancient times, inns were brothels, places of disease, unacceptable unless one was in desperate need. Preachers would travel and stay in homes, dependent upon **hospitality**.

“hospitable” – from the Greek word φιλοξενία  
– which is translated as ‘loving strangers’

But are there limits??? Are there boundaries??  
Are we to show any discrimination?

In the *Didache*, a late 2<sup>nd</sup> century extra-biblical document, it is written in **Chapter 12** – “*Receive everyone who comes in the name of the Lord, and prove ... him ... If he who comes is a wayfarer, assist him as far as you are able; but he shall not remain with you more than two or three days if need be. But if he wants to stay with you, and is an artisan, let him work and eat. But if he has no trade ... see to it that, as a Christian, he shall not live with you idle. But if he wills not to do, he is a Christ-monger... Keep away from such.*”

All well and fine. But the *Didache* is not Scripture.  
→ Do we have any guidance from the Word of God?

John gives a warning against hosting false teachers.

→ Our hospitality is to be discriminatory.

## READ 2 John

As we have now, there was then, the threat of the false teachers (vs. 7)

Although the book of 2 John is small...small things can be very powerful.

### Illustration:

1. **Dynamite** comes in a small package.
2. A **nuclear warhead** is about one foot in diameter and two and a half to three feet in length.

**Illustration – James 3:3-5** – “if we put the **bits** into the horses’ mouths so that they may obey us, we direct their entire body as well. <sup>4</sup>Behold, the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a **very small rudder**, wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. <sup>5</sup>So also the tongue is a **small part** of the body, and *yet* it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by **such a small fire!**”

In all likelihood, John wrote many short letters like this. But in God’s sovereign purpose, divine superintendence, and happy providence, these two are preserved for us.

Both deal with receiving true Christians in hospitality and rejecting false Christians with discernment

→ **2 John** gives its weight to rejecting the false

→ **3 John** gives its weight to receiving the true

And John reminds us that most battles are won in the little things.

John again encourages us to: Walk in Truth, walk in love, and walk in obedience. He describes the life within the church and the danger without the church.

**Proposition:** We have **3 markers** in our text this morning, **2 John 1-3:**

- I. The **Identity** of the Actors
- II. The **Priority** of Truth
- III. The **Security** of Grace

**So That:** To set the stage for our study of this magnificent little gem.

**1<sup>st</sup> Marker** in our text, ...

**I. The Identity of the Actors    2 John 1a**

Point – The Author and the Audience

Proof – “<sup>1a</sup>**The elder to the chosen lady and her children**”

**A. The Author**

Unlike 1 John, the author does identify himself – “**the elder**” – this refers to both his age and his standing/office.

→ The readers know who he is and they know him well.

Point – Historically, it is believed that this is the Apostle John

Proof – Article – “**the elder**” → points to John as the last living apostle would be right in describing himself this way

Characteristic of John’s humility – he doesn’t like to refer to himself by name in his writings (Gospel – “disciple whom Jesus loved”). He also uses “the elder” rather than “the apostle.”

The Age of the Apostles is over. The tongues and miracles that heralded and authenticated the Apostles in their ministry has ceased in fulfillment of 2 Corinthians 12:12.

The full Church Age is at hand.

John is the sole survivor of an earlier generation. He is “**the elder**”.

Singular → 2 John 1 and 3 John 1 are the only occasions in New Testament where the word “**elder**” appears singular in number. All the other appearances are plural.

These were likely to have been written the same time or soon after 1 John, which was at the end of his life, about 90 to 95 A.D.

John writes this letter as an elderly man with pastoral care.

John is a model of sanctification. John had three years with Jesus but then he had decades of life experience and sanctification.

**Illustration** - Remember **Luke 9:54** → Jesus and the Apostles wanted to go into a Samaritan village and the village did not want to receive them. The **Son of Thunder** wanted to call fire down from heaven. Now the aged **Apostle of Love (and Truth)** merely says, “Do not receive them.”

**Application** – This should be our goal... to have the rough edges of our strengths smoothed out and refined, the valleys of our missing knowledge filled in, and the mountains of our wrong thinking and wrong motives leveled out before the Lord.

## **B. The Audience**

“**to the chosen lady and her children**” – from original language ἐκλεκτῆς κυρίας – which literally translates “to the elect lady”

Some allegorize the text and have the lady refer to a church and her children as the members of the local church. There are three problems with this (among many, I’ll just list these for now) →

1) With all love and due respect to our covenantal brethren, a Christian should interpret Scripture literally unless there is a clearly stated reason not to.

2) There is no distinction between a church and her members.  
The church is the members, the people (not the building, programs, etc.).

3) What, pray tell, is “an elect church”? There is no such thing as a non-elect church.

No. This is a real woman with real children, a real sister, and real nieces and nephews (v.13)

Some have suggested “elect Kyria” or “Lady Electa”  
I actually read in one commentary, I kid you not, “Lady Electra”  
→ Now, I am not sure where they got the “r” ... this was  
suggested before the Marvel Universe gained widespread popularity ☺

→ What do we know about her?

1) Her children are obedient to the truth (4)

2) She opens her house for the local house church and is gracious and hospitable to traveling Christians and preachers.

3) She is well-known and loved by all (1b) → the illustration I have in mind on this particular date of June 4<sup>th</sup> should be very obvious ♥

## **II. The Priority of Truth                      2 John 1b-2**

Point – There are always problems in the church. Whether it is the first century or the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are wheat and tares, sheep and goats, Truth and error, unity and heresy.

You have the children of God and the children of the devil.

You have heaven and hell, right and wrong, the light of God’s love and the night of satanic hate, eternal life and eternal death.

When it comes to traveling missionaries and Christians

→ Whom to receive? How to receive?

→ Whom to reject? How to reject?

**Illustration** – John, the black and white Apostle, is not interested in setting up a **spiritual halfway house** for us.

When John speaks of the truth, he speaks in definable terms.

He is not like many of the young restless and reformed pastors who seem to think then can take their **theological lego blocks** and build whatever they want in their **little church sandbox**.

Now, we might have a tendency to think John would not recognize the vague, undefined, and ill-defined vagaries of the modern evangelical church. But this is precisely part of what John was shepherding against and away from.

Did not our Lord say, “I am **the** way, and **the** truth, and **the** life; **no one** comes to the Father, but through Me.”???

Boundaries, definable Truth, Doctrines of Grace delivered once and for all to the saints in the pages of Scripture.

John did not hold to a **playdough Christianity**, one where the doctrine and teaching is malleable and smooshed together to make whatever the little child fancies.

Proof – “<sup>1b</sup>**whom I love in truth**” – key to entire letter

“**whom**” is masculine which includes: the lady and her children of both genders

“**I love in truth**” – literally – “I, myself, love in truth”

John stresses his love for them with an emphatic → “I, myself”

“**love in truth**” – sets the stage for the rest of this short letter

→ Sermon Title

**Mic 7:20** – “You will give truth to Jacob *and* unchanging love to Abraham”

**Zech 8:19** – “love truth and peace.”

**Eph 4:15** – “speaking the truth in love”

**2 Thess 2:10** – “they did not receive the love of the truth  
so as to be saved”

**1 Pet 1:22** – “Since you have in obedience to the truth  
purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren”

**1 John 3:18** – “Little children, let us not love with word  
or with tongue, but in deed and truth.”

**Truth** – 5 times (6 times in 3 John)

**Love** – 4 times (7 times in 3 John)

**John** is:

- driven by the truth
- compelled by the truth
- burdened with the truth
- obligated to the truth

He is consumed with:

- knowing the truth
- guarding the truth
- proclaiming the truth

“**and not only I, but also all who know the truth**” – She is well-known and loved by all. By all Christians.

Notice how bold John is with <u>the Truth</u> . Notice how bold he is with <u>Doctrine</u> . → the “ <b>elect lady</b> ” → “ <b>all who know the truth</b> ” 😊
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“<sup>2</sup>**for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:**” – Eternal life

**1 John 2:17** – “the world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.”

**1 John 2:25** – “this is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.”

In biblical Christianity, **love** and **Truth** DO NOT merely coexist. That implies each could exist without the other, which is not the case.

No. In biblical Christianity, **Truth** and **love** are inseparable, and go necessarily and always together.

The scope of Truth-love – “**love in truth**”

The bounded inclusivity of Truth-love – “**and not only I, but also all who know the truth**” – not just John but others as well

The purposeful reason of Truth-love – “**for the sake of**”

The personal abode of Truth-love – “**which abides in us**”

And the promised duration – “**and will be with us forever**”

**Illustration** – Love and Truth ... Truth and love ... **like peas and carrots** 😊

**Illustration** – like blood and oxygen. Truth is the oxygen. Love is the blood that delivers the oxygen of Truth.

**Application** – You need both blood and oxygen to live!

### **III. The Security of Grace                      2 John 3**

Point – Stated positively, **grace**, **mercy**, and **peace** flourish in an environment where Truth and love prevail.

Stated negatively, just as there is no love without Truth, so also there is no **peace** without **grace**.

Proof – “<sup>3a</sup>**Grace, mercy and peace will be with us**”

**Grace** – from the Greek word χάρις – which is translated as *attractiveness, charm* – what is felt toward another *goodwill, favor* – God’s heart toward human beings *kindness, favor, helpfulness* – effects produced by God’s favor *ability, power, enabling* – experience or state resulting from God’s favor *state of grace, favored position*

Grace is foundational!

It is unmerited favor and much more beyond that.

**Mercy** – from the Greek work ἔλεος – translated as compassion, *pity, sympathy* – demonstrating God’s *lovingkindness, faithfulness*

**Rom 11:30** – “just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience,<sup>31</sup>so these also now have been disobedient, in order that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.”

**Peace** – from the Greek word εἰρήνη – literally translated as opposite *armed conflict, war*; an agreement between persons in contrast to *division, dissension*; a greeting or farewell corresponding to the Hebrew word *shalom: health, welfare*; inner rest and harmony, *freedom from anxiety*; reconciliation with God; an end-time condition, the salvation of mankind through the reign of Christ

These 3 incomparable gifts span from

→ “The first motion of God to the final satisfaction of man.”

<p><b>Grace</b> removes the culpability of sin <b>Mercy</b> removes the misery of sin <b>Peace</b> removes the enmity of sin</p>
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→ This is an **Definite Promise**

“**will be with us**” thrust at the beginning for emphasis

→ literally – “Will be with us! – grace, mercy, and peace”

→ This is a **Decided Promise**

No other New Testament epistle uses this form in the opening greeting (a future indicative in an epistolary salutation)

Proof – All the **Pauline** epistles omit the verb (“Grace to you”)

**Peter** (1 and 2) uses optative – “may Grace be with you” –

**John** – Assurance! Certain/Definite Future/Affirmation

→ This is a **Divine Promise**

Proof – “<sup>3b</sup>**from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father**”

Repeating “**from God the Father and from Jesus Christ” –  
By repeating this preposition, John brings out the separate  
personality and the sovereign equality of the Father and the  
Son → Not – “from God the Father and Jesus Christ”**

→ And this is a **Discriminatory (Bounded) Promise**

Proof – “<sup>3c</sup>**in truth and love**”

**Illustration**– Imagine you sit down at the breakfast table with a bowl of cereal and a bagel. You bring out your spoon, dive it into the bowl of cereal ... but unbeknownst to you ... the milk was poured 45 minutes ago and so you pull up a smooshed together lump of paste.

You think, well I still have the bagel. You pick it up ... and it feels like a wooden disk. The bagel is weeks old and beyond stale. You bang it on the table like a hammer.

**Application** – Beloved, in the same way, love disconnected from Truth becomes **mushy sentimentalism**. And Truth unhinged from love becomes **stale fundamentalism**.

## CONCLUSION

**Alan Wolfe**, political scientist and sociologist on the faculty of Boston College wrote in his book, *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith* – “In every aspect of the religious life, American faith has met American culture – and American culture has triumphed.” He continues, “Whether or not the faithful ever were a people apart, they are no longer... Talk of hell, damnation and even sin has been replaced by a nonjudgmental language of understanding and

empathy ... Far from living in a world elsewhere, the faithful in the United States are remarkably like everyone else.”

A Christian commentator said,

*“If we lack discernment, we’ll die from a thousand illnesses.”*

Beloved, this little book, **2 John**, packed with explosive truth, will cure this ailment. May God bless the reading of His word, the preaching of His word, and the learning of His word, and the applying of His word.