

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Truth: The Sphere of Existence

Scripture: 2 John 1:4

Code: 63-2

Well we return in our study of the Word of God tonight to 2 John...2 John, just thirteen verses but packed with wonderful truth and blessing. I've entitled this little study of this brief epistle by John, "Living in the Truth...Living in the Truth." Anybody who knows me very well knows that I am driven by the truth, I am compelled by the truth, I am burdened with the truth. I am obligated to the truth. The whole of my life and ministry is bent in the direction of knowing the truth, guarding the truth, proclaiming the truth. That really does define me top to bottom, side to side, in total.

And that is essentially the theme of this postcard epistle, just a brief letter. The idea here is to call every reader to be faithful to the truth, recognizing that we live in a world of lies and a world of liars. Deceivers and their deceptions are everywhere. Five times the word for truth appears here, the word *aletheia* in the very first section. Let me read verses 1 to 4.

"The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth. And not only I but also who know the truth for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever. Grace, mercy and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father in truth and love. I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father."

Five times in the very beginning we are confronted with the Greek word *aletheia* which means truth. This, of course, is true of 3 John as well. In 3 John the emphasis is on the truth, verse 1, "Gaius whom I love in truth." Verse 3, "I was glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth, that is how you are walking in truth." Verse 4, "I have no greater joy than this to hear of my children walking in the truth." Verse 8, "Therefore we ought to support such men that we may be fellow workers with the truth." And then verse 12, "Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone and from the truth itself."

John writes these two little letters emphasizing the priority of living in the truth. Two personal letters, one to a lady unnamed, called the chosen lady, one to a man named Gaius. Both of them clear calls to live in the truth. The world is then divided between those who know the truth and live the truth and those who live in deception. That's how the world is split, the deceived and those who know the truth.

John, of course, the Apostle John, the companion and intimate friend of the truth incarnate, Jesus Christ, was inspired by the Holy Spirit to provide these two letters to the point, very focused, very direct, unmistakably clear as calls to live in the truth. I've said this so many times, I repeat it again for the benefit of those who may hear only this message, the most important thing in the world is the truth of God. And so John gives us here this call to the truth. It is not a solitary call, it is merely an echo of what is all through the Scripture.

But the specific prompting to write here was the ever present threat of deceivers, the ever present threat of false teachers. And as we noted in our opening message on this epistle, false teachers would travel around as the true preachers of the gospel did and they would seek to find a home in the churches and to find hospitality from the believers in those churches and to settle in to a Christian home, win the favor of the family, infiltrate the church, under the support of that church, teach their damning lies. And as I told you last time, Christians were obligated to show hospitality to other believers, to embrace strangers within the family of God and to welcome them in in order that they might be received by fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. The true preachers and the true teachers and the true saints took advantage of that, of course, but so did the liars and deceivers and charlatans and frauds and emissaries of Satan, the false apostles and the false teachers who masquerading as true preachers of the gospel found their way into homes, set up embedded in the fellowship, taught their subtle but gangrenous lies, gained converts, twisted the gospel, subverted the church, robbed it of its power and its witness.

Some of the believers in the name of hospitality, perhaps undiscerning, opened their homes unwittingly to these false teachers. And it is very likely that the lady addressed in this letter did just that. The letter then, being written to her to warn her about such lack of discernment. As we said last time, it is written to a lady and her children who are loved in the truth. And this lady is warned in verse 7, "Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, this is the deceiver and the antichrist, watch yourselves." In verse 10, "If anyone comes to you and doesn't bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house and do not give him a greeting. For the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deed, let alone gives him lodging."

The epistle closes with a mention of this lady's sister. "The children of your chosen sister greet you." Apparently he had met either the sister or the children of the sister and maybe that's how John heard of the lady having opened her home to a deceiver.

Whatever may be the particular incident, the letter is written to instruct believers to make sure that they live in the truth and avoid any connection or association with those who lie and deceive. Nothing

threatens the church more than false doctrine...nothing. Hospitality was a Christian duty, but hospitality with discernment. We are to make sure that we stay far away from false doctrine. Every time you find such an injunction in Scripture, it is a warning of the damaging influence of subtle deception. The issue behind the letter is discernment to protect the truth, even down to the personal level. It is an indication that God does not want even one believer or one family exposed to error because the influence of error in that one family can be spread like gangrene...as Paul says in 2 Timothy 2. It is very important that you protect your mind and you protect your family from the invasion of error right in your home.

You say, "Well, we wouldn't let a false teacher in our home knowingly." That's right. And false teachers don't need to stay in homes much nowadays, they can stay at the hotel because they're so rich. But you have to be careful even when you turn on TBN. While there are certainly true teachers that broadcast on that network, it is mostly a bed of false teachers and you need to make sure you don't allow them to teach their deceptions in your home. The truth is never served, the truth is never honored, the truth is never respected, the truth is never aided in any way by those who either deny it or attack it or misrepresent it. Sound doctrine is the test of fellowship. That's essentially what the letter is saying. Sound doctrine at the core of the Christian gospel is the test of fellowship and it is therefore the basis of separation. You join with those who are in the truth, you separate from those who are not.

Now all that is behind these two, as I call them, postcards. They are exhortations and warnings that need to be heeded today as they needed to be heeded at any day. And I think particularly today because we're drowning in false doctrine. We don't even have to have a false teacher there, they can come by way of their writings, by way of their radio broadcasts, by way of their tapes, CDs, television. The church today has such a deficiency in discernment. The church is so doctrinally ignorant today, it lacks the ability to sort out the truth from error. It has a deficient immune system. It has a case of spiritual AIDS. It is unprotected because it has a low commitment to divine truth. It is an open door to those who deceive by misrepresentation and misinterpretation.

There's an interesting new book out, I was reading a review of it, it is written by a man named Alan Wolfe who is a secularist. He does not believe in God and he has no faith. He has written this book evaluating contemporary evangelicalism. And the book was written for his friends, all of the sociologists and psychologists and all of his cronies, he says, who are afraid of the encroachment of evangelicalism. They feel the pressure from the religious right, they're worried about evangelicals taking over the society, having too great an influence. And here is a non-believer, a secularist who writes a book and says, "You don't have anything to worry about with the evangelicals. You have nothing to fear because in an effort to be relevant they are abandoning all their tradition and all their doctrine." Pretty sad commentary from the world. Even they can see it. We cease to be a threat.

Os Guinness has written a new book, very penetrating book in which he says, "The church in its effort to become relevant has become irrelevant. It has decided to redefine itself in such clearly cultural terms to appeal to the culture that it can't confront the culture." The church is in a very serious situation, is going downhill at a warped speed, abandoning its doctrine, abandoning its traditions. It is cutting itself off. It is disconnecting itself from essentially what Christian truth and theology is. Evangelicalism has reinvented itself and is simply an island with no connections in the middle of the flow of human life. It is moving at the same pace the culture moves in the wrong direction. It is adrift because it has pulled up its anchor in the past. If there was ever a time when we need to call for the truth, it's now. Really the book I wrote, *Hard to Believe* is a call for a reaffirmation of gospel truth which has largely been abandoned in the new evangelicalism. But we have to call for a return to truth on every front at every point because the church has, Os Guinness puts it, in the passion for relevance has become absolutely irrelevant. And even as a secular writer sees it, and he makes this statement, "We have abandoned all that defines religion." Because what defines religion is tradition and doctrine. And the evangelical church can't dump its traditions fast enough nor can it disconnect itself from doctrine fast enough."

We're going to be finding ourselves as the odd church in the days ahead. But we are going to passionately continue to contend for the truth. And John's going to help us in this little epistle. As we go through these verses, we're going to learn about living in the truth, loving in the truth, loyalty to the truth, looking for the truth and learning the truth. That's packed, isn't it? A lot here.

Let's start with the first section, living in the truth, verses 1 through 4. And I mentioned a moment ago five times the word *aletheia* the word for truth is mentioned here, clearly that becomes the theme. It is the truth that prevails. It is the truth that dominates. It is the truth that compels. And the first thing we need to understand about the truth is that we are called to live in the truth. All our life as Christians is lived in the realm of divine truth. All that we do, all that we think, all that we live, all that we say is about the truth. And John shows us several features of this in his introduction.

Let me show you how it is that we live in the truth. First of all, the truth unites us. It is the truth that ties us together. Look at verse 1. "The elder, to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth and not only I but also all who know the truth." What he is saying here is that our connection is the truth. It's not a denomination. It's not spirituality as if it was some nebula's self-defined thing. Our connection is in a body of truth, THE truth, the revealed truth. It is the truth that unites us, that is to say all believers are linked together by a common knowledge of and belief in the truth. If you do not believe in the true Christ and the true God and the true gospel, you are not a Christian. You may believe in God. You may have your Christ. And you may think you are saved by believing something about His death and resurrection. But if it is not the true God revealed in Scripture, the true Christ revealed in Scripture and if it is not believing in the true gospel with all of its elements in the work of Christ and including true faith in the one and only Savior, Jesus Christ, who provides salvation by

grace alone...in other words, if all the components aren't there that are biblical, but does involve true commitment and turning from sin to Christ, then you have fallen short of the standard of salvation. Believers are linked in the body of Christ, we are linked together with a common eternal life by common knowledge of and belief in gospel truth. Now we're talking about gospel truth, the true view of God, the true view of Christ, the true view of salvation and the means of that salvation. All that is inherent in that, God as the sovereign of the universe, the Creator, God as Trinity, Christ as God in human flesh, Christ as the perfection of God and man in indivisible unity, Christ who lives a sinless life, dies a substitutionary death, is raised from the grave in a literal physical resurrection, ascends to heaven, intercedes for us to return to take us to be with Himself and then establish His glorious Kingdom on earth. This is the drive train of gospel truth. And that is what ties us together.

And at any point where someone does not believe that truth, whatever they may claim about Christianity, they're not Christians. When I was recently asked about the Episcopalian Church, as I mentioned to you some time ago and about the ordaining of this homosexual bishop, I reminded people that this isn't the church, this is the unchurch, this isn't the church of Christ, this is the unchurch of antichrist. They don't believe the Bible. They don't believe Jesus is God. They don't believe the gospel of grace. This is not a church. This is the spirit of antichrist.

True believers are linked not by an organization, not by some nebulous testimony to Christ or God, but by a common knowledge of and belief in the actual gospel truth. And so the letter begins, "The elder," that's how John refers to himself, also 3 John, "The elder." Some say it means that he's mentioning he's old and that would be true. This is written in the end of the first century, 90 to 95. He would be very old. All the rest of the apostles are long gone, having been martyred. He is an old man. But he doesn't really use the term that you might use in that situation, referring to himself in some more explicit language as an old man, or the aged one. He uses the term "elder" I think not so much to speak of his age, although it could imply that, as to speak of his spiritual oversight. Yes he is an apostle, but the apostles have passed from the scene. The churches have been established and elders now shepherd the church, elders, pastors, overseers. And he is one of them. In fact, he is the most elite of them. He would be the only elder alive who was also an Apostle, the only elder alive who was personally chosen by Jesus Christ to be an Apostle, the only...the only elder in the world who had walked with Jesus during His earthly life and been there at the foot of the cross and given the care of His mother and been there when He was raised from the dead and been there for the 40 days while He spoke of things pertaining to the Kingdom, been there when He ascended into heaven and been there when the Spirit of God came down. So he would be viewed as the elder of all elders. He is that elder of the church. The term could be used to refer to an old man. Paul calls himself, however, in Philemon 9, "Paul, the aged," wanting to refer to his age.

This is the only time, by the way, in the New Testament when the word "elder" appears in the singular. Churches always had elders, always a plurality. Only here do you see it in the singular because it is one man referring to himself. He is, no doubt, at this time in Ephesus, that's the sort of mother church of the churches in Asia Minor, modern Turkey. And there were other elders there in Ephesus. We know that from the twentieth chapter of Acts where Paul met with the elders from the church at Ephesus at the place called Miletus. But he is one of those elders and an Apostle. He's certainly viewed as the patriarchal elder, the patriarchal pastor over all of Asia Minor and beyond.

There are, by the way, some ancient documents that call the Apostles elders because that would be an easy transition. They maintain this immense spiritual authority because they were with Jesus and because they were the writers of Scripture. John writing the gospel, three epistles and receiving the book of Revelation. He identifies himself then as the elder because it gives him weight and authority in the church. As he begins this letter, he writes, "To the chosen lady and her children." To the elect *kuria*, it's the feminine form of *kurios*. *Kurios* is the word for Lord. Lord and lady, old terms we hear in England in the courts of England, the lord has some kind of sovereign power. The lady was his feminine counterpart. The lady was so called. The lord of the house being the master of the house, the man, the lady of the house being the *kuria*. She had a certain mastery as well, a certain lordship over the home. She was the lady of the house. He was the lord, in the sense of ultimate responsibility and authority, but she had her sovereignty, she was the *oikia despotes*, the ruler of the house, as the Apostle Paul identifies her. And so it is to this lady who is called "chosen" and to her children that John writes.

May I just grasp a thought here? The elder to the chosen lady, doesn't that strike you as an interesting adjective, *eklekte*? To call somebody the elect lady? You know, the doctrine of election, the doctrine of divine sovereign choosing has been so suppressed and repressed and has received so much bad press that we are reluctant to use it in polite company, as if just the use of it demands some kind of long and convoluted explanation because it is so hard for people to swallow. And yet here you have in a very simple greeting the use of the term elect without explanation. John simply identifies this lady as elect. That was a common way to identify a believer, a designation that belongs to every one of us. And yet I don't know that I have ever received a letter in my life that began "To the elect John." But I am elect and I have every right to be designated as elect and I rejoice that I am elect. And I understand that I am elect and I'm not ashamed that I'm elect. Why is it that we have undermine that great doctrine so long and with such diligence that we're afraid to use the word? This refers to the fact that God had chosen this lady for salvation and there's no hesitance to use it and there's no explanation of this great reality.

No different than calling someone a child of God, saved, born again, a believer, a Christian, the chosen lady...the chosen lady.

Now at this point I need to give you a little bit of an explanation. Interpreters have known no bounds in explaining who this lady was. Commentators love that. There's not enough in the text to occupy them so they invent what's not there and write pages and pages and paragraphs and paragraphs. I read it, "The elder to the chosen lady," that's really not too hard to understand, the elder being John, to the chosen lady being whatever lady in his mind was the object of the letter. But interpreters, some say, this means the whole church...the whole church. Others have said the elect lady is actually the church at Babylon...don't ask me where that came from. Others say this is an unnamed local church. Others say it's Mary the mother of Jesus. Others say it's Martha. Others say it's a lady named Electa, to the Electa lady. Others say it's a lady named Kuria, to the elect Kuria.

Where do they get all that? Nowhere. This is a personal letter parallel to 3 John which is written from the elder to the beloved Gaius. There the only difference is the name is given. And as I told you last time, this letter, 2 John as well as 3 John, is written in the classic Roman style for personal correspondence. And this lady had children and this lady had a house, verse 10, and this lady had a sister and some nephews and nieces, verse 13. It would be very unnatural to sustain such a figure of speech if this refers to a church or something like that, or THE church. It would be very unnatural to sustain such a figure of speech through the whole letter, all the way down to the final verse.

And furthermore, the letter is too brief to have been written to a church. You wouldn't find a letter written to a church this brief. Letters that are written to people are brief, like Philemon.

The only brief letter that you have that is addressed to more than one individual is Jude's letter and it's at least twice this long. To call her elect is simply to identify this lady as belonging to God. Call her elect was not to shock the sensibilities of other believers, very common, it wouldn't have shocked anybody. While the truth of election may offend some Christians with a weak view of God's sovereignty, it never offends the New Testament writers and it ever offends the Holy Spirit who inspired them to write it. It is unmistakable in the New Testament that believers are elect. Ephesians 1, "Just as He chose us...verse 4...in Him before the foundation of the world." Verse 5, "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself according to the kind intention of His will." First Thessalonians 1, "Knowing, brethren, beloved by God, His election of you." Titus 1:1, "Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of those elect of God." First Peter 1:1, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens scattered through Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia, who are chosen, who are elect." Jude 1, "Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ." The "called" meaning the same as the elect, the called out ones.

There's no hesitancy whatsoever to refer to believers as the elect. They are called the elect in all of those addresses in those various epistles without any hesitation, without any expectation of rebuttal. In fact, Jesus Himself in Matthew 24:22 said, "There would come a time when no life would be saved

in the Great Tribulation unless the days were cut short but for the sake of the elect, those days shall be cut short." Jesus Himself affirming that believers should bear the designation or the title of the elect. In Luke 18 the Lord said, "Shall not God bring about justice for His elect?" So it is that this is a glorious term. We have been chosen for salvation by God from before the foundation of the world individually.

Some people think that the term "elect" refers only to the church. That those who believe God doesn't choose everybody can pick for himself. But for those who choose to be saved, they become a part of the collective group of believers that God has elected for heaven, that the election doctrine is only a corporate doctrine that you choose to be in on your own and then you become a part of those who having chosen to believe have become elect for eternity. This demonstrates how wrong that view is. Here you have an elect lady...an elect lady and her children.

Now it interests me that her husband is not mentioned here. I don't want to belabor the point because it's in the white spaces, but you can surmise like I can, she may have been a widow. That's not necessarily the case. But for certain she was responsible and this points up what the Bible teaches elsewhere, she was responsible along with her children for the matters of hospitality in the home. The husband was the bread winner. He was out there doing what husbands need to do. When it came to hospitality and in welcoming strangers, and inviting people in and caring for them and feeding them and nourishing them and ministering to them and giving them a place, this was the lady's responsibility. May well be that she was a widow. She and her children, however, still would bear the responsibility for the care of one who stayed in the home. This was the woman's responsibility. This is indicated to us in 1 Timothy 5:10, Titus 2:4 and 5, women are to be those who wash strangers feet, who care for the home and care for children.

Now notice how John links himself to her. "The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth and not only I, but also all who know the truth." There is a bond, there is a bond of love between those in the truth. Let me just kind of pull some words out of here, "Whom I," that's emphatic, "love," present tense, "in truth," that frames and controls love. The main lesson in this letter is the truth must always govern the exercise of love. "In the truth" is qualitative, that is in connection to the truth.

I don't know whether John knew this lady very well or not. But there is a love that we share in the truth that goes beyond personal acquaintance, long friendship. You know it as well as I do, you go into another environment, you get together with other believers in Christ and there is immediately a profound affection. There is a longing, there is a knitting together of hearts around the truth. It was the truth that bound John to her. It was the truth that bound John to her children. It was the truth that bound them all to each other...all who know the truth share the same spiritual life. Our affections and

our sympathies and our care and our compassion and our concern for each other is experienced because we are tied together in the truth. It is really the truth that produces this love.

Go back to 1 John 5:1, you remember when we studied it. First John 5:1, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and whoever loves the Father, loves the one born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, we love God and we love all who are His own." This is such a wonderful reality. All of our connections, all of our affections are because of our common belief in the truth. You can't even enter into this association. You can't be a part of this fellowship. You can't even possess this spiritual life apart from what Peter says, "Obedience to the truth." People who are outside the truth, we can't embrace. That's why we have resisted. Those who are true believers have always resisted ecumenism, linking up with those in apostate forms of Christianity, connecting with those who are liberal and who deny the veracity of Scripture, the Trinity, the deity of Christ, or whatever. They may talk about Jesus but we have no real love for them, we have no real connection, we do not share common life that belongs only to those who are obedient to the truth. We have been delivered out of one form of teaching into the truth. That's why you can't be saved unless you hear the Word of Christ, Romans 10 puts it. Salvation occurs when someone believes the truth. The right message is absolutely critical. This is something, as I said, that's so much on my heart because how are we ever going to get anywhere in this quote/unquote "evangelical Christian world" if we don't get the gospel right? Because nobody can be saved without the truth.

Let me put it to you this way. A poor presentation of the truth will save. An excellent presentation of error will not. A very unsophisticated simple plain presentation of the truth will enable the Spirit of God to do His miracle of transformation. A very carefully crafted, well-prepared, cleverly devised, high-tech, multi-media presentation of something less than the gospel will not save. The end of it all, you have to have the truth and that's all you have to have. But you have to have it. So we're united by the truth, bound to each other by sound doctrine. There's no real love possible without the truth. That's why we can't be unequally yoked together with people who have a substandard gospel. You can't compromise the truth and accomplish the purposes of God. You can't minimize the truth for the sake of love, you'll never have love because love demands the truth. You create some superficial, shallow, temporary trivial meaningless kind of connection but it's not true love that comes only from the truth. So the truth unites us, that's the first thing we see in verse 1.

Secondly, the truth indwells us, verse 2. He goes on to say, "I love in truth, and not only I but also all who know the truth for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever." We're not only united by the truth, we're indwelt by the truth. Here we see the depth of this great reality. John says, "Look, I love in the truth, we all love each other who know the truth and we do it for the sake of the truth. All of our Christian love, all of our Christian fellowship is to manifest the power of the truth. This is the benchmark of our Christian faith. It's by this that all men know that we are His disciples, if

we have love one for another. It is this remarkable common love because we share a common life in the truth that manifests the glory of the power of the gospel. John says, "I'm writing for the sake of the truth. I'm writing for the sake of the truth because the truth is all we have, it's the truth that unites us. It's the truth that indwells us. And so to you, the chosen lady, whom I love, comes this letter for the sake of the truth." Literally the phrase "because of the truth," I'm writing because of the truth, I want to defend the truth, I want to protect the truth.

And really, that's the benchmark of biblical books. All 66 books were written for the sake of the truth. Every preacher should preach for the sake of the truth. Every Christian should witness for the sake of the truth. We should live our lives in a godly way for the sake of the truth. We love each other for the sake of the truth. John wrote for the sake of the truth. He loved for the sake of the truth. He lived for the sake of the truth. It's all about the truth. And he adds that next feature, "Which abides in us and will be with us forever."

One thing about a true Christian, he or she knows the truth, right? Cause you wouldn't be a Christian if you didn't know the truth. You can't be saved without the truth. That's why back in 1 John again, go back to chapter 2 of 1 John. "You have an anointing," verse 20, "you have an anointing from the Holy One and you all know." You know...cause the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you know the truth. Verse 21, "I have not written to you because you don't know the truth but because you do know it and because no lie is of the truth." One thing about a Christian, a true Christian knows the truth from error. And if you meet somebody who doesn't, then you have every reason to assume they're not a Christian because Christians know the truth. We went through that in great detail in 1 John.

If somebody is very confused about what the truth of the gospel is, then they can't be a Christian because Christians have to know the truth. People ask me all the time, "Do you think people in the Catholic Church are Christians?" I suppose a person...I'm a Christian and I've been in a Catholic Church, but one could not believe Catholic doctrine and be a Christian because they don't have the truth and you can't be a Christian without the truth. But that's true of many quasi-Christian churches. But those who have the truth, have the truth and know the truth, and it stays forever. What a wonderful promise that is.

Down in verse 27 of 1 John 2, "As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you," that's the Holy Spirit who opened your mind, illuminated you to understand that truth, "you have no need for anyone to teach you but as His anointing teaches you about all things and is true and is not a lie, and just as it taught you, you abide in Him." I don't need some philosopher to come and teach me the truth of the universe. I don't need some elite academic committee to come and straighten me out on a world view. I know the truth. It was the knowledge of the truth given to me by the Spirit of God that saved me. How important is the truth? It is the source of our salvation, it is the source of

our unity, and it is our abiding confidence...our abiding confidence.

First Corinthians chapter 2, I don't have time to read all this, but chapter 2 verse 6, "We do speak wisdom among those who are mature, a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away." We speak God's wisdom, the hidden wisdom, the wisdom which none of the rulers of this world has understood. We know what the world doesn't know. We know what the elite of the world don't know. Later on in that chapter, he says, "We have the mind of Christ." Wow! Verse 16, 1 Corinthians 2:16, one of the greatest verses in the Bible, "We have the mind of Christ." We know how God thinks. We know the truth. The unchanging truth is with us, he says in that verse. It is with us forever...forever.

See, our very life is built on divine truth. It remains our possession forever. True love flows out of that truth. Listen, true love is never increased by decreasing truth. The hue and cry of all these people is doctrine divides, doctrine divides, doctrine divides. That is a lie. That is opposite the truth. Doctrine unites. Our love is built on a common belief in the truth. Remove the truth and you don't have true biblical Christians spiritual love, you have some artificial kind of thing. True love is never increased by decreasing truth. Any such unity is not of God. And the truth of God never changes, it never wavers, it is not subject to any alteration. The truth unites us, truth indwells us.

Thirdly, John points out here the truth blesses us, verse 3. "Grace, mercy, peace...this is the common New Testament benediction...Grace, mercy and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Son of the Father in truth and love." You want grace, mercy, peace, the kind that comes from God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father? You will receive it only in truth and love that accompanies that truth. All salvation grace, all salvation mercy, all salvation peace, all sanctification grace, sanctification mercy, and sanctification peace, all glorification provisions, all that God the Father and all that Jesus Christ the Son of the Father give comes to us in truth...in truth. So many times the letters of the New Testament begin with these wonderful promises, pledging to us grace, mercy and peace.

Listen to 1 Timothy, "To Timothy, my true child in the faith. Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." Listen to 2 Timothy, "To Timothy, my beloved son. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Jesus Christ our Lord." And all other letters from Paul have grace and peace, those two have grace, mercy and peace. But always they come through Christ from God the Father through Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father. Whether it's Paul writing or whether it's Peter writing, or whether it's John writing, or whether it's Jude who writes, "May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you." All the writers of the New Testament gather up these great spiritual blessings, grace, mercy, peace. The benefits of salvation, grace for our sins, mercy for our miserable condition, peace for our separation from God, reconciliation, all come in truth and the love that accompanies

that truth. Where divine truth dominates the mind and the heart, there will be grace and mercy and peace forever. Grace for our sin, mercy for our misery, peace for our turmoil, all come through the truth that is inseparably linked to the common love we share with those who believe that truth. When gospel truth comes, it brings love and with it grace, mercy and peace.

Notice that phrasing there, "From God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father." From is repeated to place both on equal ground while not blurring them as unique persons, faithful to the Trinity.

One last point. We said that truth unites us, indwells us and blesses us. Truth also controls us. Truth also controls us, verse 4, after the introduction he starts into the body of his letter, but I want to capture this verse in the first section because it is still introductory. "I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father."

He says, "I was very glad," literally, "This is overjoyed, I was exuberant, rejoicing greatly to find," literally, "I have found." It's the Greek word *eureka...eureka*. which gets transliterated into English for the same reason, I found, same translation. I have found perhaps personal contact with some of these children, perhaps through the sister mentioned in verse 13. But what did John find? Some of your children walking in truth. They all may have been walking in the truth, that is to say they were all believers, but John can at least say, "I found some of them personally that I know are walking in the truth." Maybe they all had come to know the truth, maybe they were all walking in the truth, but for certain he had personal knowledge of some of them. Walking, *peripateo*, means like peripatetic, to walk around. The idea is to move through life, to move through life conducting themselves within the framework of the truth. They were literally controlled by the truth. They were moving around in the truth. Their life was defined by the truth. The truth is not just to be believed, it's a way of living. You don't just know the truth and believe the truth, if you're a Christian you live the truth, it controls you, it defines you. It is the path you walk. It is the life you live.

We who know Christ, we live in the truth in the sense that it's the boundaries for our lives. It informs our thinking, our speaking, our acting. It is the grid through which everything that comes to us passes. We view the world through the truth. It defines everything. It's our world view. And so he says, "I was very glad to find among your children some walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father."

We're certainly commanded to do it, aren't we? There are some specific commands in the Scripture to walk in the truth, to live in the truth. We are commanded to be holy, to conduct ourselves in a holy way. We are commanded to be obedient repeatedly in Scripture. We understand this. But this commandment here is not referring to one verse or another, it's just referring to the general tenor of

Scripture. We have received commandment to do from the Father and that commandment stretches across the whole of Scripture, doesn't it? In fact, in 1 Timothy 6:14 Paul refers to Scripture as "the commandment...the commandment." It is full of commandments but collectively it is the commandment. We live in the truth, it defines us. Truth is everything to Christ, everything. It unites us, it indwells us, it blesses us, and it controls us. Therefore our relationship to divine truth is the priority, isn't it? No wonder Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, you're fussing with so many things, but Mary has chosen the best part. She's sitting and listening to the truth." This is where we live and move and have our being, and this is where we love and next week we'll find out about loving in the truth.

Thank You, our Lord, for this wonderful insight that's provided for us through the pen of the beloved Apostle John. Give us renewed passion for the truth, this blessed glorious truth that saves, that saves. We're not saved by works, we're not saved by what we do, what we accomplish, religious ceremonies or traditions. We're saved by belief in the truth and no one can be saved apart from a message concerning Christ that is true. It is the truth that is everything. May Your church lift up Your truth before the culture, may it confront this world with the truth that saves. We thank You, Lord, that we know the truth, that we are united in a common life and love by the truth, that we are indwelt by the truth so that we view everything in the world through the truth. We thank You that we are so blessed by the truth, for it pours out for us all grace, mercy and peace. We thank You that as well we are controlled by the truth for we walk according to Your Word and Your Word, said our Lord, is truth. Make us a people of the truth who know it and love it, who celebrate it, who obey it, who proclaim it who live it out before a watching world that they may see the power of Your transforming work in our lives. These things we ask that You might be glorified through Christ. Amen.

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