

God's Truth and Our Love

2 John, 3 John

Introduction

1. Is not love of the greatest importance? (cf. Matthew 22:36-40)
 2. Yet, we must not be mistaken in love.
 3. Love is intelligent and intentional – we must have the truth concerning love, and not be flippant about it.
 4. 2&3 John present a practical illustration of some of the fundamental points of 1 John.
 5. **Rather than simply emphasizing love's importance in general, it is important that we understand God's pattern in love – the conditions, requirements and prohibitions.**
 6. **We must be active in truth – living it, teaching it, and supporting it. This is especially important when some resist the truth – will we join them, or stand in truth?**
- I. Love in Truth (vv. 1-3)
- A. Love of Brethren is in Truth and because of the Truth (vv. 1-2)
 - a. **Some make the mistake of emphasizing love as an end in itself. ("love is love" – abhorred by brethren, yet some are guilty)**
 - b. Love has boundaries – cf. 1 John 2:5, 15; 3:17 – love for God in obedience, not loving world, loving brethren.
 - c. These boundaries translate to exclusive relationships of love based on relationships with God:
 - i. We are to love enemies – cf. Matthew 5:44, 48
 1. As God does.
 2. Does God express love to them in the same ways as His children? – some exclusivity:
 - a. **"you, beloved...keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 20-21).**
 - b. **Cf. John 15:9-10** – abide in His love, conditional.
 - ii. However, there is exclusivity in love for brethren based in the fellowship of truth – **"[False teachers] are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves." (Jude 12)**
 1. The love we enjoy and show each other as brethren is privileged.
 2. **The world is not a part of this love, and those who depart from its conditions are not a part of it.**
 - d. (v. 1) – **"elect lady and her children"** – a local church and its members – John's love for them is in truth.
 - i. **"IN truth"** – the realm in which his love exists for them, and by which it is governed.
 - ii. Logical consequence – mutual love for any and all who know the truth (relational knowledge, not simply intellectual).
 - e. (v. 2) – **"for the sake of the truth" (NASB)** – such love for those in the truth is an imperative of truth.

- i. **Cf. 1 Peter 1:22** – this activity of love is a direct result of becoming brothers.
 - ii. **“Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love”** – this is the sentiment of the verse.
 - 1. It is a bond that is exclusive to truth.
 - B. Blessings from God are in Truth and Love **(v. 3)**
 - a. All we desire and need from God **“will be with [us]...in truth and love”**
 - b. To venture beyond the truth, and the love which it promotes and demands, is to leave the **“Grace, mercy, and peace”** provided by God.
- II. Love Commanded **(vv. 4-6)**
 - A. God's Children are Commanded to Walk in Truth **(v. 4)**
 - a. **John's joy is not derived from any reality beyond the fact of their walk in truth:**
 - i. Not mere affection for each other, emotional connections, tolerance among one another, positive environment, etc.
 - ii. Joy in truth because of fellowship with God – **1 John 1:3-4 (“our joy,” NASB)**
 - b. God's commandment – **John 8:31-32; 1 John 1:7; 2:24-25**
 - i. Can we over emphasize the truth?
 - ii. Is caring to rightly divide the truth missing the point?
 - iii. **Does exclusively seeking sound doctrine exclude any necessary thing? Like love?**
 - B. God's Children are Commanded to Love Each Other by Keeping God's Commandments **(vv. 5-6)**
 - a. **(v. 5) – Cf. 1 John 2:7-11** – the beginning of the gospel emphasized the command to love as Christ had shown **(cf. John 13:34-35)**.
 - i. **This is a part of walking in the truth** – hence the contrast of light and darkness based on the element of love or hate.
 - b. **(v. 6) – cf. 1 John 5:1-3** – this is not an undefined, fluid love, but one directed by God in His word. **(cf. Romans 13:8-10)**
 - i. **Would include the necessary love to keep the brethren in the truth – 1 Peter 4:8; James 5:19-20**
 - ii. **Fortifying each other in light of the present danger of sin and error – would include the fortification of love's boundaries →**
- III. Love Prohibited **(vv. 7-11)**
 - A. Deceivers Exist Who Reject the Truth and Threaten the Reward of God's Children **(vv. 7-8)**
 - a. **“For”** – why the reminder of the command to walk in truth, and the renewed plea to love one another (i.e. those in truth) in truth?
 - b. **(v. 7)** – there are false teachers wandering around deceiving.
 - c. **“Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.” (v. 8, NASB)**
 - i. MSS differences with 2nd person plural and 1st person plural on verbs – NASB more accurate to context.

- ii. They need to watch themselves that they do not lose the apostles' doctrine/witness (**"what we have accomplished"**) in being deceived by this error. (**cf. 1 John 4:6** – if you're of God you hear the apostles' doctrine)
 - iii. **Full reward** – to turn away from the truth is to lose your salvation. (**cf. Hebrews 2:1-3**).
 - d. **There is a very practical way in which this might happen, and happens among the brethren today →**
- B. Showing Love to the Deceivers as if They Were Brethren Makes an Alliance with Their Evil (**vv. 9-11**)
 - a. (**v. 9**) – this is the basic test of fellowship (and primary activity of fellowship, love – **vv. 1-2**) – fellowship with God based in truth.
 - i. As Jesus demonstrated – **John 7:16-18; 8:31; 14:6; 18:37**
 - b. (**vv. 10-11**) – those who go beyond the word of God, who leave the truth, are not to be shown the type of love considered earlier.
 - i. Love in truth – (**v. 1**).
 - ii. Love one another (i.e. those who are walking in truth) – (**vv. 4-5**)
 - iii. Love that accords with truth/commandments – (**v. 6**)
 - iv. **Logical test** – **2 Corinthians 6:14-18** – there is no fellowship between two holding conflicting doctrines, and therefore is not the giving and receiving of love (which love is a product of the relationship in truth).
 - v. **Compare** – **Romans 16:16-17** – **verse 16** represents a show of love between brethren in truth, and **verse 17** represents a prohibition of such activity among those who are in error.
 - vi. **Consider** – **2 Corinthians 2:8** – while love was shown in the discipline, a sort of love was withdrawn, then restored upon repentance.
 - vii. (**v. 11**) – to go beyond the parameters of love that are set (**v. 1** – in truth), is to share in the evil, lose the truth and lose reward (**v. 8**).
 - 1. NOTE: Not limited to error, but any sin – **Ephesians 5:11**
 - c. **"Love is love"? – Some love is evil – i.e. love is not good when it is contrary to God's pattern, in fact, it is not love.**
- IV. Love Given and Withheld (**3 John**)
 - A. Gaius' Love in Truth and Support of Truth (**vv. 5-8**)
 - a. Hospitality Shows Faithfulness in Truth (**vv. 5-6a**)
 - i. **"you do faithfully"** – i.e. faithfulness, fidelity, to the truth – (**v. 3**) – this specifies what he engaged in.
 - ii. Doing for brethren, **"and especially when they are strangers" (NASB)**
 - 1. **"send them forward on their journey" (v. 6)** – *propempō* – "to set one forward, fit him out with the requisites for a journey" (THAYER)

- 2. Hospitality – **cf. Romans 12:13; Hebrews 13:1-2**
- iii. **(v. 6a)** – such is love.
- iv. Gaius could have been a victim of Diotrophes – **(v. 10b)** – Here he is encouraged by John who properly labels and evaluates his activity.
- b. To Support the Truth is to Work for the Truth **(vv. 6b-8)**
 - i. This was no mere random good deed Gaius had engaged in or would engage in.
 - ii. **(vv. 6b-7)** – you do well because these were servants in the truth who went forth in Jesus' name with pure motives.
 - iii. **(v. 8)** – When they are received/supported by one (Gaius), that one participates in a work for the truth. **(cf. 2 John 10-11)**
- B. Diotrophes' Love of Preeminence and Resistance of Truth **(vv. 9-12)**
 - a. Love of Preeminence Resists the Preeminent One **(v. 9)**
 - i. In contrast to Gaius, and in the way of Gaius' continuation of his faithful doing, is a wicked man named Diotrophes.
 - ii. Similarly to knowing of Gaius' reputation, John knows of Diotrophes' reputation:
 - 1. **"I wrote to the church"** – whether 1 John, 2 John, or some other letter lost, or even destroyed by Diotrophes.
 - 2. **"does not receive us"** – contrast with **v. 8** – he does the opposite of Gaius **(v. 10b)**
 - a. Just as reception equates to working for the truth...
 - b. ...rejection equates to rejecting the truth, working against it – **"does not accept what we say" (NASB); "does not acknowledge our authority" (ESV)**
 - c. **Cf. 2 John 8** – what the apostles worked for, in the witness of Christ, is rejected by Diotrophes.
 - iii. **What John specifies as the reason for Diotrophes' actions** – he **"loves to have the preeminence"** – *philoprōteuō* – "to be fond of being first, i.e. ambitious of distinction" (STRONG)
 - 1. **Cf. James 3:16** – when one has selfish-ambition he will be contrary to authority and working what is evil.
 - 2. Only One has preeminence – **Colossians 1:18; 3:17** – we must submit to Him.
 - a. Diotrophes' selfish ambition blinded himself to the presence of Christ in John, and bringers of truth, and so he stood against Christ instead.
 - b. Love of Preeminence Aligns One Against the Truth **(v. 10)**
 - i. Diotrophes' love of preeminence translated to his active malice toward John and those who came with the truth – **(v. 10a)**

1. **"talking wicked nonsense against us." (ESV)** – the phrase indicates an effort to slander John's name to others, but through nonsense.
2. What one should do – **3 John 3** – rejoice with those who are actively doing good for the Lord's cause.
3. What happens when one loves the preeminence – **2 Corinthians 10:10** – not supplied with any evidence in contradiction to truth, pitiful efforts are made to degrade the man.
4. **(v. 10b)** – this extends even to those who would have the intention to do what Diotrephes refuses to do – they become a victim of his evil as well.
 - ii. John intends to withstand him if he comes – **(v. 10a)** – ***the only way a Diotrephes can persist in his evil and ruin a church is for faithful brethren to do nothing*** (**cf. Matthew 12:30** – in doing nothing they scatter abroad.).
- c. Doing Good in Truth Determines Our Relationship with God **(vv. 11-12)**
 - i. **(v. 11)** – men like Diotrephes do not determine who is of God, but God does.
 - ii. **(v. 12)** – Demetrius is in fellowship with God based on his deeds in truth and for truth.
 1. He is likely bearing this letter, and John's encouragement for Gaius to continue his work of hospitality is with reference to receiving Demetrius when he comes through.

Conclusion

1. The love Christians are to have for one another is unique.
2. It is a privileged love based in fellowship in the truth.
3. Therefore, this privileged love of brethren in truth is not to be extended to those who go beyond the truth. To do so is to leave the truth yourself.
4. However, this privilege of love is also a duty. Often it is inconvenient and demands sacrifice. When others resist the truth and those who proclaim it, the truth must be stood for.