

## “The Fellowship of Truth and Love”

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I'm going to be preaching from the book of 2 John. For the last few weeks I've preached on 1 John. Well, John wrote three epistles: First John, second John, and third John. Lord willing, it is my intent to preach through the short book, there's just one chapter, of second John and then third John which is one chapter. And what you might ask, well why are these so short? Well they are short because obviously, this is the intent of God. You know these Scriptures are God inspired and these books of second and third John are shorter because everything that they relate to has already been said in first John. What I am going to talk to you about today, and this is the title the message, “The Fellowship of Truth and Love.” That's really the theme of second John and third John. Now first John established what I call the the benchmarks of true Christian Fellowship. First John was a polemic which means it presents ideas that are poles apart like the North Pole and the South Pole in our world. These are ideas that are poles apart. He starts off for example, talking about light and then darkness. Those are poles apart. That's what a polemic is. God is light and in him is no darkness at all. And if we're true children of God, we walk in the light of God's truth and not in darkness. Now there's a lot of things we don't know but we do know what God reveals concerning salvation and how he save sinners according to his glory in the by his grace through the Lord Jesus Christ and so that's the gospel light that believers are brought into by the Holy Spirit through Christ and what they walk in. And he says, if we if we walk in darkness you know we're lost. That's what it is to walk in darkness and then another benchmark of fellowship has to do with the idea of righteousness. To walk in righteousness is to walk by faith in Christ. It doesn't mean that we are righteous within ourselves or that we have righteousness in our works. It means that we look upon Christ as the Lord our righteousness and we live resting and trusting in him and resting upon him following him as the Lord our righteousness. And that's his righteousness that God has imputed to us. God has taken the merits of Christ obedience unto death and he's charged them to the account of his people and that's what the blood is all about. We're justified by the blood of Christ his blood is his death which brought forth perfect righteousness, perfect satisfaction to

God's law and justice and that's what God requires. We cannot produce that by our works but we have it in Christ. In Jeremiah 23 he's called the Lord our righteousness, we stand in him. Paul wrote about it in Romans chapter 4 when he said, Blessed is the man to whom righteousness is imputed (charged, accounted) without works. And our fellowship is a fellowship of righteousness if we're in the family of God. We all recognize that our righteousness is Christ. Another benchmark of fellowship is love and that's that godly love that God brings his children into which brings them together in Christ and that's a love that cannot be broken; a fellowship that cannot be broken. A lot of people misuse and misunderstand the word love. Those are those are the benchmarks of fellowship.

Well, here in second John he writes, look at verse one, it says, ***“the elder (that's John) unto the elect lady and her children”*** So now he's writing to an elect lady and her children. Now a lot of biblical scholars say this elect lady is not one individual believing woman, but it's John using a metaphor for the church. Now that could be so. The church is God's elect - the elect lady - and as far as the feminine lady there, the church is called Christ's bride, Christ's wife, the bride of Christ, the wife of Christ. The church is the bride of Christ. He is the husband; we're the bride. He's the head; we're the body. And so that could be, some insist, that he's writing to one particular woman with her children and she's one of God's elect, indicated by her belief in the gospel, belief in Christ. But let me tell you something, whatever position you take on it, it doesn't matter. This is truth for all the church, for every individual man or woman in the church. This book is true, so understand that. But one thing that is significant here is he calls whoever he's talking about (the church in general or one particular sinner saved by grace- a woman) he says, you're elect (chosen of God). My friend, election is one of the most beautiful doctrines of Scripture that before the foundation of the world God chose a people, not because of any foreseen faith or works in them. God's not looking down through a telescope of time as some believe or through a crystal ball. No, he chose them by grace. They're called the election of Grace. He uses Jacob and Esau as an example of it in Romans chapter 9. ***“Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated.”*** That's what it says. Somebody says well I don't like that, that doesn't sound fair. Well, read Romans nine and what you will see there, if you object to that, if you say it's not fair or it's mean of God to do that, read Romans nine and recognize yourself asking the questions there

that the apostle Paul was guided and inspired to answer by the power of the Holy Spirit. You'll see the reality of it. So, understand that, but this lady was elect and her children, but here's the next thing. John says in verse one, "**whom I love in the truth;**" Now, there's the key; the Fellowship of truth and love. You see, understand, the Fellowship of God's people is a binding together that God, by his grace in Christ, brings them together on the basis of the truth of how God save sinners by his grace, in and by the Lord Jesus Christ . It's not a fellowship based upon anything else. It is not based upon your socioeconomic class. Now, you probably have people you associate with because you have the same interest in things of the world, like maybe a job, sports, a team or something like that, maybe how much money you make or how little you make, maybe your skin color. That's the way people are. That's natural man, but this fellowship here and this love here is based upon one thing: that is the truth of God's gospel, how he saves sinners by his grace in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me show a passage in the book of Galatians chapter 3, verse 26. You know, back in the early church there were many Jews who claimed to be Christian but who insisted that the special privileges of salvation and blessing belong only to the Jews and not to the Gentiles. And in order for believing Gentiles to enter into these special privileges, they had to succumb to Jewish practices like circumcision, keeping a sabbath, keeping a day, all of that. Paul the apostle especially, but even Peter later on, was adamant to dispel that kind of thinking. That is not Christian thinking. That is not grace thinking. That is not gospel thinking. That is not any part of the Fellowship of the true Christian faith. And Paul writes in Galatians 3:26 about it. He says in verse 26, "**for ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.**" How do I know I'm a child of God? How do I know I'm a sinner saved by grace? How do I know that I have His righteousness imputed to me? I'm justified, forgiven, declared righteous by faith in Jesus Christ and that faith is not natural to you or me. It's not the product of our own decision. This faith is not because you made a decision for Christ when you were 12, 13, 14 years old. It is not because you were baptized. This faith only comes under the truth by the new birth, God-given. "**For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast...**" Ephesians 2:8-9. It is not because you gave your heart to Jesus. It's because he gave you a new heart. Read the Bible. And so he goes on in Galatians chapter 3,

look at verse 27. ***“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”*** To be baptized into Christ there is not referring to water baptism. Now, water baptism, immersion in the Bible, is an ordinance, a confession of Christ. There is no salvation in the waters of baptism. Salvation is in the water of life: Jesus Christ, the blood of Christ. And those who are baptized are to be baptized in his name, confessing that he is their salvation. If you're baptized without knowing Christ, you just took a swim, that's all. But baptism does not save you, does not wash away sin, but baptized into Christ here simply means placed into Christ or united to Christ. God's elect were united to Christ before the foundation of the world eternally. They were united to Christ legally in justification. When Christ died, he died for me. I died with him legally. Not in my own person, I wasn't there but I was there in his mind and heart according to the electing grace of God. When he was buried, I was buried. When he arose again, I arose again. When he ascended unto the father, I ascended. I am in Christ; I'm united to him. He's my representative legally. And then, we were united to Christ redemptively in his death when he died. But then in time, God's going to bring his elect under the preaching of the gospel and they will be united to Christ spiritually in the new birth. Galatians 3:27 And so he says, ***“as many as have been baptized into Christ (united to Christ) have put on Christ.”*** Now, to put him on is to believe in him; put on, like a garment. That's a metaphor now not a literal description. It's not that Christ is just on the outside of us. No, he's only inside of us by spirit and by his word but we believe on it. And then he says in verse 28, if we believe in Christ, we've been united to Christ, ***“There is neither Jew nor Greek (Jew nor Gentile), there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, (if you belong to Christ) then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*** You're believers; sinner saved by grace.

So this fellowship that John is speaking of in second John, it's the fellowship of love and truth.

And it is that truth that brings people together in love; united together under the gospel. Now, this love is much misunderstood. We always think of love as an emotion we're feeling like a Hallmark card or something. That's not what it is. This love is what causes believers to stay together in Christ, in the truth. And he says in verse one. this is 2 John 1. ***“The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only,***

***but also all they that have known the truth;***” Not only is John the apostle in fellowship with this lady or this group of people in the truth but all believers are together in the truth. Verse two says, ***“For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.”*** If the truth is in you, if the truth has set you free, if Christ has set you free, you'll be there forever. As we learned back in first John, you cannot apostatize from Christ. One thing I know: if God the Holy Spirit has given you life, a new heart, a new mind, knowledge and brought you to faith in Christ and repentance of dead work, you cannot ignore it, you cannot deny it, and you cannot leave it. And if you just have an outward profession of faith, you can and will. But he says in verse three, ***“Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.”*** You see how he emphasizes that? In truth; not just in truth, in love; not just in love, but in truth and love. And so he says in verse four, ***“I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.”*** What is that commandment? It's to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and love the brethren. That's the Commandments that is talking about. And that's the work of the Holy Spirit by the grace of God in Christ. And so he says in verse five, ***“And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.”*** John spoke of that. He said I write no new commandment unto you but an old commandment, which is new in a sense, in that you've never done this before. You might have had religious fellowship with a lot of people before you heard the gospel, but it wasn't religious fellowship in the truth and in the love of God. There's no true, godly fellowship until you're brought to the truth and thereupon comes the love that binds us together. And so he says in verse six, ***“And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.”*** Do you see that? Love God, love our neighbor? Yes, but the commandment given to believers - in line with that - is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and love the brethren. Under the law, we're told to love everybody. Love everybody even our enemies, he says. It said that in Matthew five in the Sermon on the Mount. But that's a different kind of love and I'm not just trying to shirk my responsibility to love my enemies. That's hard to do, impossible for us to do perfectly. We are to love our enemies. But in Christian love - in love and truth, the Fellowship of truth and love, is

different. That's what causes us to stand together under the truth of the gospel. If you believe the gospel, the true gospel now, I'm with you and you're with me. Now we may not like the same ball teams. We may not like the same politics. We might get upset and angry over certain things and argue with each other, but in the Gospel, we're together and that's what he's talking about.

He goes on to verse seven. He talks about a negative here. He says, ***“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.”*** There are deceivers who come into the world, do not believe the gospel, but they claim to be Christian. That's why they're deceivers. They claim to know Christ, they claim to believe in him, they claim to believe the gospel but they don't believe the true gospel. You know there are many false gospels out there in this world that come under the name of Christianity. That's right. Let me tell you something about false Gospels. We could talk about that for ages because there are so many but basically, here's what you need to look for when you're listening to a preacher preach, including me. You need to look for several things but all false Gospels will make salvation in some way, at some stage, to some degree conditioned on you or me, conditioned on sinners. Whereas the true gospel tells of a salvation that was and is conditioned fully, 100% upon Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is both God manifest in the flesh and who by his work on the cross fulfilled those conditions and secured the entire salvation of every sinner for whom he died and was buried and rose again on that third day. That's the true gospel. But now false Gospels will go elsewhere. They'll talk about how Christ died for everybody conditionally. He died for you but you must make the difference. That's a deceiver. The true gospel is wrapped up in the glory of Christ's person, as God manifest in the flesh, and the power and success of his redemptive work on the cross to save his people from their sins; Jesus Christ crucified. So that's the first thing. the second thing that false Gospels will do is they will measure holiness and righteousness on a sliding scale rather than pointing you constantly to the perfection of righteousness and holiness and goodness that can only be found in Christ crucified and risen from the dead. That's so. You know when people talk about being right with God, being blessed of God, a lot of times they'll talk about well, you know I've got to do better and they may need to do better. I need to do better, but my doing better is not my righteousness before God. My works are not my holiness in God's sight; Christ is. ***“For Christ is the end of the law for***

**righteousness to every one that believeth.**” Rom. 10:4. And if if they come along preaching any other way calling it Christ or Jesus Christ, it's a false Christ. Paul dealt with with that in second Corinthians 11. When he talks about when those who come preaching another Jesus, by another spirit, another gospel. And so in 2 John 7 he says, **“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,”** now what he's talking about there is the whole gospel: the person and work of Christ. And he says, **“This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”** That's one of few times that you see the word Antichrist in the Bible. It's always used by the apostle John. Antichrist simply means to be against Christ. The true Christ and anybody who claims to believe in Christ and to follow Christ and to preach Christ who doesn't believe in following and preaching the true Christ is antichrist. And so he says in verse eight, **“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought,”** That is what which we have gained, not that we worked for. I know a lot of people say well you work for it. No, we don't work for it, God gives it, we gained it. And he says **“but that we receive a full reward.”** Now, the full reward is eternal glory. And it's not the reward of our works. It's not even the reward of our perseverance. It's the reward of grace. When Christ saves a sinner, he keeps that sinner and he brings that sinner into glory. And it's not rewards-based religion. In fact the reward here is singular. It's the full reward that Christ earned for his people and that they all receive equally because of his righteousness imputed to us. It's not that God's going to bring you to judgment and say, let's see how many works you did and now I'm going to give you a bigger mansion or I will give you a smaller mansion. No, that's not gospel, that's works. That's antichrist. No sir, it speaks of the reward of righteousness, the reward of grace. That's what Christ earned for his people. All the benefits and blessings that God's people receive are an inheritance of grace. And so he says in verse nine - this is where he puts this fellowship of truth and love to the test. **“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”** Am I in fellowship with Christ? John spoke of it in 1 John 1. Our fellowship is with the father and the son. He went on, our fellowship by the Spirit is with the people of God. How do I know if I'm in fellowship with the father and son? How do I know I'm in fellowship with the people of God? Well he says it here - **“Whosoever transgresseth”** - that word transgression means go too far. **and abideth** (continueth) **not in the**

***doctrine*** (the teaching) ***of Christ, hath not God.*** My friend, if you claim to be a Christian but you don't believe the gospel that is according to truth, this word, you don't have God. You're not a child of God. You give no evidence of being in fellowship with God. But he that continueth in the doctrine of Christ, the teachings of Christ, the glory of his person, the power of his finished work, he has both the father and the son. He's in fellowship with the father and the son. This is the Fellowship of truth and love.