

Walk in Truth, Walk in Love

2 John 1:1–13

Second John is one of those short, one-chapter letters that is small in size but weighty in purpose. Second John and Third John were written by the apostle John, and both letters were shaped by a real-life challenge the early church faced: traveling ministers—teachers, evangelists, and prophets—moving from church to church.

Some of these brothers were sincere servants of Jesus Christ, strengthening congregations with the Word of God. Others were impostors—deceivers who used spiritual language, claimed divine authority, and quietly spread false teaching. So the early church needed discernment, and John writes with a shepherd's heart: love what is true, love one another, and do not make peace with deception.

1. A Shepherd's Greeting Rooted in Truth

"The Elder, to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth" (Second John 1:1, NKJV).

John calls himself "the Elder." That title can mean a church leader, but it also fits John as an aged, seasoned saint—writing with the tenderness and authority of a spiritual father.

He addresses "the elect lady and her children." Some have understood this as an individual woman and her family. Others see it as a local church and its members. Either way, John's emphasis is clear: the bond between believers is not built on personality, preference, or convenience—it is built on truth.

"Because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever" (Second John 1:2, NKJV).

Truth is not a passing trend. God's truth does not fade with time, and it does not bend to culture. It "abides," and it remains forever.

2. Grace, Mercy, Peace—In Truth and Love

"Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love" (Second John 1:3, NKJV).

John's greeting is more than polite words. It is spiritual reality.

- Grace is God giving us what we do not deserve.
- Mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve.
- Peace is the settled rest that comes when we are reconciled to God.

And John anchors it "in truth and love." In other words, this is not the world's idea of love—where truth is relative and optional. In the church, absolute truth and love must walk together.

3. The Joy of Seeing Believers Walking in Truth

“I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father” (Second John 1:4, NKJV).

Nothing blesses a pastor’s heart like seeing God’s people walking steadily with the Lord—living what they say they believe. John’s joy is not that they merely *know* the truth, but that they are *walking* (living) in it.

That is a word for us: truth is not only something we confess; it is something we live and practice.

4. The Old Commandment That Always Feels New

“And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another” (Second John 1:5, NKJV).

John keeps returning to this, because love is the family mark of the believer. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another” and “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35, NKJV).

And here is the way John defines love:

“This is love, that we walk according to His commandments” (Second John 1:6, NKJV).

Biblical love is not just warm feelings. It is loyalty to God expressed in obedience. Love is not merely what we say; it is how we live.

5. The Danger: Deceivers and the Doctrine of Christ

“For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (Second John 1:7, NKJV).

John is not vague here. He says that one of the clearest marks of deception is a false view of Jesus Christ. If a teacher will not confess the truth about the incarnation—God the Son truly coming in the flesh—then that teaching is not from God.

John’s burden is pastoral protection: error about Jesus is never a small error. When you get Jesus wrong, everything else collapses.

So he warns:

“Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward” (Second John 1:8, NKJV).

There is something believers can lose—fruitfulness, usefulness, joy, reward, credibility, and spiritual momentum. Deception always steals.

“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God” (Second John 1:9, NKJV).

That is strong language, but it is loving language. John is drawing a bright line: you cannot claim the Father while rejecting the Son. You cannot honor God while denying the truth God has revealed about Jesus Christ.

“He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son” (Second John 1:9, NKJV).

6. Love With Discernment: Hospitality Has Limits

“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him” (Second John 1:10, NKJV).

John is not telling believers to be rude, proud, or cruel. He is telling believers not to partner with deception. In the early church, traveling teachers often depended on hospitality. To welcome a false teacher as a spiritual brother, to host him as a representative of Christ, was to give him credibility and a platform.

“For he who greets him shares in his evil deeds” (Second John 1:11, NKJV).

There is a difference between loving a person and endorsing their message. We can speak kindly, pray for someone, and still refuse to assist or promote what is false.

7. Face-to-Face Fellowship and Full Joy

“Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full” (Second John 1:12, NKJV).

John reminds us that Christian life is not meant to be lived at a distance. Fellowship matters. There is a fullness of joy that comes when believers gather, pray, speak of the Lord, and strengthen one another.

And he closes:

“The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen” (Second John 1:13, NKJV).

Practical Application

- Walk in truth, not merely talk about truth. Ask yourself: where does my daily life need to come back into alignment with God’s Word?
- Love one another with real obedience. Love is not only sentiment; it is action—patience, forgiveness, service, generosity, and humility.
- Practice discernment. Not every spiritual-sounding message is from God. Measure teaching by the doctrine of Christ and the fruit it produces.
- Set boundaries without losing compassion. You can care about people without giving false teaching a place in your life, home, or church.

A Challenge for Believers

Follower of Christ do not be naïve. John says “many deceivers” have gone out. That is not paranoia; it is reality. Anchor yourself in Scripture. Stay close to Jesus Christ. Love the truth enough to refuse what is false—even when it comes wrapped in religious language and friendly smiles. And love the people of God enough to guard the church from teaching that dishonors Christ.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

If you are not yet in Christ, God is calling you into truth and life—not through a system, not through self-improvement, but through His Son.

Jesus saved us when He shed His blood on the cross for our sins. And the resurrection declares that He is God, Savior and Lord.

Turn to Him. Confess your need. Ask Him to forgive you, to wash you clean, and to make you His. The truth is not merely an idea—it is a Person. And Jesus Christ is ready to receive you.