

Do Not Participate in their Evil Deeds

A Sermon on 2 John: 1-13

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I. INTRODUCTION

II. CUSTOMARY GREETING (vv. 1-4)

- a. The apostle John opens up his letter to the church with this brief introduction in verses 1-3.
- b. What I want us to key in on in this introduction is the amount of rich theology pouring forth from the apostle.
 - i. He initially identifies that he loves them, and this love is positional, that is, it is born out of the truth.
 - ii. Secondly, he states that this church is not simply loved by him, but by all who know the truth.
- c. It is because we know the truth of the gospel that we can truly come to love one another.
 - i. Put simply: look around you. Some of us can be particularly difficult to love - but notice why John says we have this love for one another.
 1. It is for the sake of the truth. Part of this is simply carries a doctrinal aspect.
 2. It is a particular truth that John has in mind - it is the set of facts that you must believe if you are to be a genuine Christian.
 - ii. Secondly, this truth is one that abides in us and will be with us forever.
 1. John is alluding to the Spirit of God.
 2. The Spirit testifies to the truth and the Spirit *is* truth.
 3. All genuine Christians contain a love for the brethren on account of the truth and the Spirit of God. He will not depart from them.
- d. The greeting is not a formality before getting to the real meat.

- i. It connects with the commands he will give shortly
- ii. John is comforting them by these words and the words that follow.
- e. John acknowledges their faithfulness and gives them praise (v. 4)
 - i. "walking in truth" means is that the Christian acts in a consistent manner with the gospel of Christ.
 1. How many people have you seen fall away from the faith in a devastating way?
There are common factors in all of them.
 2. Inevitably, they did not walk in a manner consistent with the truth they claimed, and so, they fell away and demonstrated they did not ever have a true love for God.
 - ii. Notice John also says that this is the commandment we have received to do from the Father.

III. A REMINDER TO WALK IN THE TRUTH (vv. 5-7)

- a. No Christian is beyond the pale of hearing a reminder to walk in the truth and love.
- b. The phrase "that we love one another" actually carries with it the same force that the imperative command would.
 - i. Notice he defines what that means right here in the text.
 1. He is drawing us back to recall that the content of the Christian faith is mirrored in a faithful obedience to walk as Jesus walked.
 2. This is genuine love, and there is an object to this love, which Christ Himself summed up in first and second great commandments.
 - ii. God is worthy of worship - yet our neighbor, bearing the image of God, is due a common love expressed through that Love of God.
 1. We aren't left wondering what loving God and our neighbor looks like.

2. If we want to know how we can love God and our neighbor better, we need not look any further than our Bibles.
- iii. If we are to love our neighbor, how much more do we love the body of believers?
1. In 1 John, the apostle expresses it even more clearly by saying the one who claims to love God yet hates his brother is a liar.
 2. John presents this about as black and white as you can get – If you love God you will love the church.
- iv. What else does this look like, but walking in truth?
1. He’s expressing both a right set of doctrinal beliefs and the outworking of those beliefs in an obedience to God’s commands and a love of the brethren.
 2. This is not some new and novel interpretation of the teaching of Christ.
 - a. It is not an addition to the teaching of Christ. It *is* the teaching of Christ and it is one we must walk in.
 - b. If we fail to walk in obedience to these commands, we are not heeding the teaching of Christ.
- c. In verse 7, John will give them an additional reason why they are to walk in love.
- i. The word John uses here for deceiver also carries with it the connotation of one who is an imposter.
 1. They aren’t clearly seen as a false teacher, at least not right away.
 2. For all purposes, these imposters looked and sounded like genuine believers.
 - ii. Notice that he speaks of these teachers already being out in the world.
 1. It is not a future point when they will go out.

2. John also reveals the content of their deception, being that these people have denied Christ's coming in the flesh.
3. There are a couple of different ways one could understand which of Christ's coming that is being referred to here:
 - a. It is speaking to Christ's future coming, thus, these false teachers are denying that He will return bodily as He has said He would.
 - b. That it refers to a past event, meaning the incarnation, and they are denying Christ came in human flesh to dwell with us.
 - c. It is likely the second: that they denied the Incarnation.
- iii. Ultimately, John links these teachers directly to the ones whom they pledge true allegiance to: Satan and the antichrist.
 1. Notice there is the definite article for both *the* deceiver and *the* antichrist.
 2. These men were not simply going out to do these things of their own will – they were doing the work of Satan and the antichrist.

IV. WATCH YOURSELVES (v. 8-9)

- a. You'd think John would say - watch for the false teachers, yet the command itself is that they watch themselves.
 - i. Why? John says, "So that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward."
 1. The terms John uses here for accomplish is referring to a nature of work that is expecting a return on it
 2. This is coupled with the term that he uses for reward.
 3. John here is not speaking toward being saved, but ultimately, the reward they are building up as treasure in heaven.

ii. He assumes that they are genuine converts, and thus, they will want to preserve their reward and remain faithful.

1. Think of this in respect to how you fit in, in the body of Christ.
 - a. As the church, we should be laboring together for Christ. If we aren't we are also missing out on our heavenly reward.
 - b. We labor with an expectation for reward and by the teaching of Scripture, that's not a selfish thing.

iii. That reward is bound within the principles of love, which for John specifically shows itself in a marked obedience to God's commands and a love of the brethren.

1. When you keep yourself in line with walking in truth and love, it reveals who your true Father is.
2. The best antidote to false teaching is not that you watch every single false teacher out there, but that you watch yourselves through obedience to Scripture and love of the brethren.
3. The person who forsakes these things and refuses to repent is not concerned with losing that future, heavenly reward.
4. We know this because they aren't concerned that they are not within the household of the faith to begin with.

b. In verse 9, John speaks to those that push the boundaries of orthodoxy, meaning they come to the table with teachings that are contrary to that which we have heard from the beginning.

- i. John is alluding to the fact that these people are actually denying the teaching of Christ.
 1. They are so progressive that they have developed their own Christology.
 2. John is dealing with a specific instance, in that these false teachers are denying that He came in the flesh to be God with us.

- a. Yet this reaches far beyond just this one heretical teaching and we see this all the time in the church today.
- c. We need to remember that all men are worshippers; there is no such thing as neutrality.
 - i. False teachers have a very specific goal, and as John has already revealed, they are doing the work of Satan and the antichrist.
 - ii. Their goal is to produce false worshippers who will go in hell with them.
- d. But notice that John is also breaking apart these two distinct peoples:
 - i. There are those who go too far and deny the teaching Christ, thus, they do not have God.
 - ii. The second group is those who abide in the teaching of Christ, and have both the Father and the Son.

V. DO NOT RECEIVE THEM INTO YOUR HOUSE OR EVEN GREET THEM (vv. 10-11)

- a. Anyone who comes to this church and does not bring the teachings of Christ is to be rejected.
 - i. Hospitality served two very important functions within this time period:
 - 1. It provided foreign travelers with the care they needed, through the means of food, lodging, and protection.
 - 2. Hospitality also provided a means of protecting one's own community.
 - ii. He singles out who is to be shunned: the one who does not bring the teaching of Christ, but instead, brings the teaching of the deceiver.
 - 1. Realize what this means and what John is referring to. The work of these men is really the work of Satan and the antichrist.
 - 2. Think of the work our adversary does and what his goals are.
 - 3. That same adversary is the one working through these false teachers.

- a. These are the men whom God charges your elders to protect the church from.
 - b. When was the last time you prayed for your pastor and your elders?
- iii. John tells us that we ought not welcome them into our homes or even greet them.
 - 1. Literally, John is expressing we are not to welcome them cheerfully, or as if they are welcome in our presence at all, like we would a brother or sister in the faith.
 - 2. These people are literally shepherding people to hell.
- iv. Yet also, notice what he says here: if you do these things, that is, if you welcome them into your home and if you greet them pleasantly, you are participating in their evil deeds.
 - 1. What impression does it give when we welcome such people in our homes, or greet them cheerfully?
 - 2. What does it tell brothers and sisters in Christ when we speak of them in positive terms?
 - 3. What does it tell a world utterly blinded and shielded from truth, about the truth we claim to believe?
 - a. I am convinced one of two things, If not both, keeps us from being as firm as we ought to be with false teachers:
 - i. We don't really see them for what they are because we simply don't know our Bibles well enough.
 - ii. We've somehow cheapened the ministry of teaching – that God really isn't all that serious about the content of people's beliefs.

VI. CLOSING OF THE EPISTLE (vv. 12-13)

- a. Though there is much else to inform the church of, he has no desire to do so in this letter.
 - i. We don't know the content of what John would like to say here, but it would seem whatever it is can wait until a later day.
 - 1. For the apostle John, the rise of these false teachers was a matter worthy of calling to their attention.
 - 2. It would seem the urgency of the situation called for John to send a letter rapidly, and by the time they got this letter, some of the false teachers may have already been in their midst.
- b. Regardless of what else John had to say to them, we don't have a record of this. We simply know his hope was to come to them and speak face to face, so that their joy may be made full.
 - i. It is difficult to pinpoint what John means by their joy being made full
 - 1. It is likely expressing a means of genuine fellowship as those who labor together in Christ.
 - 2. Not only do they share the genuine bond of love in truth that he speaks of, but they abide in obedience to the Lord's commands.
- c. Finally, John closes by saying, "The children of your chosen sister greet you."
 - i. Couple of quick points here:
 - 1. We can see John is writing from another church some distance away.
 - 2. We can see the apostle's heart for this church as he sends off this dire warning.
 - a. Not only is he aware of savage wolves coming upon them that they are not aware of – but those at his location know he is writing to them.
 - b. It is not hard to imagine the saints of this sister-church hearing of his burden for them in this, yet also, praying for them.
 - 3. Yet what may slip by here is the greeting given.

- a. The greeting here carries a significance we ought not to overlook for a couple of reasons.
 - i. The first being that it is one between brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - ii. Just as that greeting is intrinsic to that bond, it stands as a testimony against the false teacher who refuses the truth because they do not love Christ.

VII. CONCLUSION

Community Group Questions

1. Why do you sense John commands the church to watch themselves rather than look out for all those who would come in?
2. What are some ways we can be praying for our elders and seek to make ourselves an easier sheep to shepherd?
3. When you are with family and friends and they knowingly speak falsely of God, yet claim to be Christians, what is your reaction? Are others in that circle aware it is counterfeit Christianity?
4. Where do you “draw the line” with someone you believe may be a false teacher? What does that look like in practice: do you still get coffee? Remain Facebook friends?
5. What are some Christian beliefs that we can disagree on reasonably – and what are some which are necessary to believe? How do you know?