



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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### The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 John 1-13

“Wolves at the Door”

2 John

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Thank you Mark. We are starting a new series this morning and ending it this morning as well. I figure, “Where do I go after 1 John?” And we’ll go to 2 John and the next week to 3 John. So, 2 John this morning, verses 1 through 13. “The elder to the chosen lady and her children/Whom I love in truth and not only I would also all 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/Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which you have had from the beginning that we love one another/And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments/This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning that you should walk in it/For 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 that you do not lose what we have accomplished/But you may receive a full reward/Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God/The one who abides in the teaching he has both the father and the son/If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching do not receive him into your house and do not give him a greeting/For the one who gets in a greeting participates in his evil deeds/Though I have many things to write to you I do not want to do so with paper and ink/But I hope to come to you and speak face-to-face so that your joy may be made full/The children of your chosen sister greet you.”. May the Lord bless this

reading of his word, and bless our time of study together. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we give you thanks for this time together. It's a great blessing and privilege to be with your people on a Sunday morning. It's a beautiful day that you've given us. We thank you for that. But really, every Lord's day is beautiful and that's an opportunity for us to be together to fellowship together. To have true fellowship, which is a word, and so Lord as we come to this text of Scripture, this brief book, but one filled with encouragement as well as caution bless us as we study it. Give us an understanding in the things that we've read and the importance of it, the urgency of the warning that John has given but also the importance of the encouragement that he gives about being men and women characterized in Christ by love and truth. The two go together as we will see and are so essential.

I know it's so important for us to be men and women who are grounded in truth, so that we can be people who love one another in love you. So Lord bless us as we study as we consider this book of 2 John. Build us up in the faith. Help us to be the kind of people that John was encouraged to read about those to whom he wrote following in your truth. So Lord bless us. Build us up in the faith and bless us not only spiritually, but materially. We look to you for that we depend upon you for every moment of our existence. So easy to, sort of, drift away from that reality and our thinking. I'm not denying it, but just not giving much thought to it because so consistently is your faithfulness to us that we begin to take things for granted, but the reality is we live and move and exist, and you. That means every moment of our life is dependent upon you. And if we have much, if we enjoy health, if we have employment, if we have friends and family, if we have a sound mind as well as physical health, it's all a gift from you. All of it comes from you, it's your will for us. Which should make us grateful every moment of life and realize that we have an abundance from you.

And, ultimately, Lord, in your province when we are deprived of those things when our health fails or when we find ourselves without work and difficulties of one kind or another. Ultimately, it fits within your plan. We don't always know how it is to draw us close to you. It's to bring us to an understanding of our own weakness and our complete dependence upon you, and to look to you and to know that you're

faithful to meet those needs, and so Lord, you've given us as your Saints and fellow believers the privilege of blessing of helping one another and praying for one another and asking that you intercede and bless those who were a difficulty.

We pray that you get healing where it's necessary. Mark said, we've got a long list in the vaulted of prayer requests. People pray for people who are recovering from surgery or possibly facing it. People who have gone through great difficulties, physically, bless them, encourage them, bless those who are out of work, open doors of opportunity. Bless those who are simply weighed down by the pressures of life, they can get to us. Help your people to reflect deeply on who we are, what we have in Christ. Made a spirit of God who's the comforter, encourage them and bless them and build them up in the faith. We pray that for ourselves now Lord. We pray that as we continue forward in our service that you encourage us, bless us, give us understanding of our text and how it applies to us and prepare our hearts now through the hidden that we'll sing.

Thank you for the grace of God. We thank you for what you've done for us in your son, it's in his name we pray. Amen.

[Message] One of the best-known stories of all times is the legend of the Trojan horse. After 10 years of war, the Trojans woke up one morning to find the Greeks gone and a wooden horse at the gate. The priest of Troy warned, “Beware of Greeks bearing gifts.” But no one listened. They brought the horse in and of course the enemy hiding inside it that burn the city to the ground. John has a similar warning for the church and 2 John. He warns of the antichrists that have gone out into the world and tells Christians not to let them in the house. It's a short book, but it's packed with truth. It tells a lot about the wiles of the devil, but it's not all caution. It's also encouragement.

John rejoices that the church was growing in the faith. “It was walking in truth,” he says. He praises believers for doing that and he directs them in the way of continued growth by walking in love and obedience. But what gave urgency to this letter is that John had learned that there were enemies at the gate. And he wrote to tell the church not to let them in. Now the letter has a beginning that almost seems to have been written in code. John doesn't give his name or the identity of the church to which he wrote. Instead, it is the elder to the chosen lady. John's name isn't attached to the letter. John's name isn't attached to his gospel, or to the first epistle, or the

third epistle, any of his writings that there is good ancient tradition that he is the writer of this book and that supported by the similarities between this book and the other writings of John, so I'm taking this as the second letter that John wrote.

Why he calls himself “the elder” is not clear. Perhaps it's because he was the elder of a church, and he chose that title over the apostle, or something of that kind. That's possible. In fact, that seems to be the majority view in terms of this use of the word elder. But if this letter was written around A.D. 90 or 95, then John, the last surviving apostle would've been a very old man. So the title maybe something like Paul's description of himself in Philemon verse nine, where Paul calls himself “the aged”. Well John, the elder. And that title itself suggests the experience, the wisdom and the authority of an old warrior.

The chosen lady may be an individual. 3 John, in fact, was written to an individual, **Tageous**, as we'll see next week. This may have been written to a lady and to her children; that's the way it is addressed. But it may also be a church. And I'm taking it that way. Not with complete confidence that I'm taking this as a letter that was written by John to a church and all through the letter he refers to her in the plural. That could be referring to her and to her children, which would be in the plural, but if he speaking to her specifically and refers to her in the plural; that would suggest that this is a figurative description. And the church is in Greek, a feminine word and the church is the bride of Christ. So, to refer to the church as the chosen lady is understandable.

If this is a church, then what John is doing at the beginning is indicating God's grace that's been extended to this assembly because he speaks of this assembly, this church as the chosen lady. They are the object as God's sovereign grace. And not only does he speak to them in terms of God's grace and love and affection for them, but of his own affection for this church as well. He speaks of love for them. That affection is made clear from the next statement when he affirms his love for her and her children and truth, and then puts a lot of emphasis on truth in the next versus and connects truth with love.

This truth he says in verse 2, “Abides in us and will be in us forever.” Well, that truth that he's speaking of, that abides in us, is the truth of the word of God. Is the truth of the gospel, if the truth of all of God's revelation and a statement that it abides or lives is a way of saying this is not just truth, this is special truth. This is

living truth. This is truth that abides, that dwells. It almost has a life about it. Which is not an odd implication, because that’s really what the author of Hebrews tells us about the word of God, Hebrews chapter 4:12, “It’s a living and active. It’s sharper than any two edged sword.” This is a supernatural book, the Bible. The word of God is supernatural. It does live it does abide because the spirit of God uses it to transform all those who possess it.

And the more we read it, and the more we embrace it and follow it, the more we’re changed. So this is something that does abide it is a living word within us. He then adds his greeting in verse 3, with the promise, “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.” So there again is his emphasis, strong emphasis in the first part of the letter on truth in love. They go together. They can’t be separated. Grace, mercy and peace become visible through or in truth and love. Truth and love are the marks of the Christian life. But love is always conditioned by truth. Love is never given at the expense of truth. Truth is the basis of genuine love. Love, if it’s genuine love, if it’s effective love, is discerning love. And for a person to be discerning and the way he or she loves a person, that person must be grounded in the truth of God. Directed in love and affection by the truth of God.

So, love, the kind of love that John is speaking of here, is wise and it acts for the good of others. Even when the act of love is a difficult act. Even when it results in wounding the person whose love and sometimes that’s what love must do it must wound in order to bring about healing and to bring about good. Proverbs teaches that. Proverbs 27:6 says that very thing, “Faithful are the wounds of the friend.” A friend who is faithful wounds the person when that person needs to be wounded. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.”

Now we don’t want to win people and we certainly ourselves don’t want to be wounded, but sometimes that’s necessary. Sometimes the word of God, the truth of God must be brought to bear upon an issue in our life and that wounds. Maybe on a personal basis, whereas we see a problem and we address it to an individual and private. Maybe it comes out of the pulpit where the word of God is simply taught, but it applies to us in a direct way and we realize it, but the spirit of God directs it; but that’s what the word God does. It wins and sometimes that’s necessary for good. At

the same time love tempers our use of truth. The Proverbs also say “Pleasant words are healing to the bones.”

There’s a right way to use truth. Really love and truth qualify each other. They have a kind of symbiotic relationship. John Stott wrote, “Our love grows soft if it is not strengthened by truth. Our truth grows hard if it’s not softened by love.” So they work together. They go together. There, the marks of the Christian. And John praises the chosen lady - maybe an individual, may be a woman and her children, but, either that or the church and its people - he praises them for living in both love and truth. Verse 4, “I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth/Just as we have received commandment to do from the father.” Now those are great words of praise.

These people understood the truth of God’s word, and they were obeying it. They were walking in it, which is a way of describing their conduct, their obedience. They’re not like that character, that James refers to, who is one he’s like a person who looks in the mirror and he sees the image of himself and then he walks away and forgets what he’s seen. These people aren’t the kind of people that read the word of God, or they hear it hot and they walk away and forget about it. There may be interested at the time, but it really doesn’t have an effect. These people heard the word of God, they understood the word of God, they believed it, they obeyed it. He says, “They were walking in it. That’s their conduct.”

Walking indicates progress when it’s a walk in the right direction. But that only happens when we walk in truth, or walk in the light as John put it in his first epistle. They were doing that. The lady and her children were doing that and John encourages them for it. They had given him great joy when he found that this was the case. They were really living according to the word of God. You’re being obedient, you’re being a light, you’re being a blessing to those around you. So they were walking in it, but we never come to that point in our walk where we stop, where we kind of reach the destination, we’re there; we’ve arrived.

We never reach a point where there is no more room for improvement. Not in this life. And I would say in a life to calm we’re never going to come to a point well if we stop here. This is all there is. Eternity is going to be growth forever. I can’t really picture that but I know that to be true. It’s going to be an expanding experience of holiness and glory and joy that never ends. We won’t be encumbered by sin, then

in any way as we are now, but they'll be no stopping that. And it's the same in this life. We do struggle with sin here and this is why we need to be progressing continually as well, but there's no end to progress and growth in the Christian life.

They had been progressing, but John encourages them to continue on in that to advance in the Christian life and he instructs them in verse five to do that, to love one another. If the command that Jesus gave to his disciples and John 13, versus 34 and 35, he called it - you remember - the new commandment. “A new commandment I give to you.” Well, John, says here it's not new. He's not contradicting the Lord. It's not new because this is some 60 years later. Church is well-grounded in this commandment that had been new when Jesus first spoken to the disciples. No, it's not new, it's characteristic of the Christian life. Love is the very heart of Christian ethics, of Christian behavior and thinking, and they knew it. This family or this church to which John wrote knew it. For that very reason, though - because they knew it, and it was so important - for that very reason he needed to remind them of it again.

We always need to be reminded of the truth of God. We always need to be reminded of the fundamentals of the faith. We always need to go over and over the truths of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice for us and what it's done for us and who we are in him. And who we are to be, to be loving people; people of love and truth. And so he's reminding them, again, of that aspect that is so important for the Christian to know and for the Christian's life. So John reminds them of the need of it and then he defines it. He defines love in verse 6, “And this is love/That we walk according to his commandment/This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning that you should walk in it.”

So, God's command that is, that we walk in his commandments. That's love. Love is more than that. Love involves other things. Love involves emotion, affection. When we think of love often we - I think \_\_\_\_, of affection, and it's that. It has to do with the emotions as well as the mind. But basically, as John says it forth here, love is active. It is obedient to God. BF Westcott, the British commentator a century ago, defined love as “Truth in human action.” I think that's a good definition. I think that gets to the heart of what John is saying here. Love is walking according to God's commandments. They are other pathway of our life. That's what the Psalm

has said - you remember – “The word of God,” he said, “is a lamp to my feet.” And we are commanded to live according to God’s instruction.

Now that requires effort on our part. That requires discipline; we have to apply ourselves to the word of God. We have to study it. We have to learn it. We have to be here with the people of God, and be among the teaching of God’s people. That takes some discipline. It’s not always easy. It’s demanding, but it’s always for our good. It always bears fruit. Studying of the word of God bears fruit with a knowledge of the word of God which bears the fruit of wisdom and insight into life and as the Psalm is said your word is a lamp unto my feet. It guides us through the dark swamp of this world and all of the hidden pitfalls that are there and all of the hidden enemies that are there. Which is very thing of which John is going to speak about in a moment. We need the word of God for that.

Now, this has been described everything in the letter, so far, as the life within; that is the life within the church. It’s about the word of God, it’s studying it, it’s knowing it, it’s being grounded in it, it’s loving one another and loving the Lord God. All of that based on truth. And John has put a lot of emphasis upon truth, and the importance of it. The reason is because in the next verses he writes of the danger without. He writes about the false teachers who are outside the church, and who want in. And in order to adequately recognize this threat we need the truth. We need to know God’s word. John has told his friends to continue walking in the truth. Now he explains why that is so urgent.

Verse 7, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world/Those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh/This is the deceiver and the antichrist.” You’ll recognize from that last statement, the similarity to 1 John, where he warns that many false prophets have gone out into the world and he speaks of the antichrists. They are the people that deny that Jesus Christ had come into this world in the flesh, that he’d become a man. They denied the incarnation. And like that threat in first John, this is probably the same kind of threat. It’s probably the same heresy, an early form of Gnosticism that denied the incarnation of Christ, which this is also a denial of the atonement of our Lord, denial of his saving sacrifice for us.

You can’t deny that Jesus Christ is a man and still affirm the atonement, the work of his death on Calvary. You cannot deny any of that and have a gospel and that’s what they were doing. These were serious men. They were on a mission.

They had gone out into the world - that's the same word that used of Christ's disciples going out into the world in the great commission. They had been sent out as well. Satan has his great commission. He sent his own propagandists out to preach a false gospel and win disciples to it. And John says, "There are a lot of them, many deceivers have gone out into the world."

There's a lot of deception out there of all kinds, but specifically of this heretical kind. The devil never sleeps. He's always active, and is quick to counterfeit the Lord. He's not original, but he's very clever. Luther called the devil "God's ape" he mimics God. He always has. And it's no different today. Satan has his preachers and his professors in pulpits and in schools and there are many of them. We will meet them or they will meet us and we should expect that. To be forewarned is to be forearmed and that's what John is doing with his friends here. He's forewarning them, and forearming them because there are many out there and he knew they were close at hand, and he's warning them of them, and the warning is we need to be ready. They need to be ready, we need to be ready.

They come in a deceptive way. They come as Christian missionaries. That's what makes them so dangerous and the reason John writes so urgently; they call themselves Christians. Heretics don't come calling themselves heretics they don't come describing themselves as ministers of Satan. Paul will tell us that that's what they are in 2 Corinthians but they wouldn't say that of themselves. They wouldn't come proclaiming paganism or denying Christ. There is no deception in that. You're forewarned immediately with that. No, they do just the opposite. They come praising Christ, and they come preaching Christ, and they come with the claim of being the true interpreters of Christ. Who he is, they understand it.

But their interpretations always differ at some essential point from the Christian faith, and they differ in a lot of different ways. It may be that they deny the Trinity or they deny the incarnation. They deny that Christ is the eternal son of God, who came into this world as a man. That he took to himself, a human nature, that he had a true body and a reasonable soul, that he's a man just as you and I are the without sin. They'll deny that. They will then deny the need of atonement for salvation or the need of grace through faith. They preach a gospel of works of salvation through ceremonies, circumcision or baptism. In fact, the first great heresy

really is the one that Paul dealt with in the book of Galatians, which was a confusion of grace and works. Grace and merit.

Those Judaizers said, “You must believe in Jesus Christ.” And I don’t think from anything I can read in the book of Galatians that they question who Christ was, that wasn’t the problem. The deity of Christ, the humanity of Christ; they seem to have not challenged that. But what they said is, “It’s not enough to believe in him. You must believe, but you must also add to that faith, one work and that’s circumcision.” Well, today it may be add to your faith one work and that’s baptism, that’s a confusion of grace and merit; human merit. And it empties the gospel of its power. It’s no gospel as Paul calls it, another gospel, a false gospel. And he brings down the strongest condemnation of it.

Well, here in this letter the problem was denying the incarnation. If the eternal son of God, did not become a man then we have no mediator to join us to God. There is no mediator between God and man. There must be a man that does that, there must be a man who is the sacrifice, the atonement for men and women; a human for humans. And if Jesus is just a man - and that really is more the teaching that we face today from false teachers - then we have no sufficient sacrifice for sins. It’s not a sacrifice of infinite value. And so it doesn’t save. Well, these men denied the incarnation evidently. Well, they certainly did. That’s what John says, “They deny that he came in the flesh.” They no doubt drape themselves in the name of Christ, but they actually denied him. And John says that, “Any teacher denying the person and work of Christ is a deceiver and antichrist.”

That’s the warning. They are out there and they are close at hand. They are at the gate. So John now gives instruction on how to deal with them, how to counteract them. The first thing he says is be on guard. “Watch out” he says. The enemy is subtle, that he is disguised, so look for him and look to yourself that you not be taken in by these individuals. Otherwise, John says, you may lose everything that you’ve worked for. Now in verse 8, where he gives this warning is everything that we have accomplished.

Notice, “Watch your selves that you do not lose what we have accomplished.” Well, the “we” is probably the apostles. What we have done - and maybe the apostles, maybe John himself was instrumental in establishing this church wherever it was and what he’s saying is - what we have established and what you in your

ministries have built upon, and the church that has been establishing, growing is in grave danger and could very well, if not protected, become a work that’s empty, that’s destroyed by these. These false teachers are like savage wolves, that’s how Paul described false teachers. They enter the sheep fold, they ravage the flocks. So he told the Ephesian elders in Acts chapter 20, in the last meeting that he had with them when he says goodbye. They’ll never see each other again. He has some very important instruction to give them, some encouragement and direction to give them. He tells them to be on guard for themselves.

“Be on guard for yourselves” he said. In other words, look after yourselves. You’re elders of the church. You must look after your own spiritual vitality and protect yourself. Because if you don’t how can you be a help and a guard and a blessing and a pastor to those in the church. And so they are to do that so that they might guard the flock of God. Be on guard and watch because the wolves don’t look like wolves, they look like sheep. That’s what Jesus said, “False prophets dress up in sheep’s clothing.” They pose as servants of Christ, they have knowledge of the Bible. Many of them are very intelligent people. They know how to use the word of God. Many of them are very pleasant people. They seem to be caring people, all of that is what goes into the deception. And they may not even know that their deceiving. They may really believe what they’re doing and who they are and think that they are genuine and sincere. But if they deny the truth of the gospel they’re not. Inwardly they are what Jesus said, ravenous wolves.

So we must be careful and watch out otherwise, John says, “We’ll lose the flock.” The church will be ravaged, it will be devastated and so much Christian service will have been wasted. But diligence, watchfulness can prevent that. And it can result in great reward, eternal reward. That’s the promise that John gives in the rest of verse 8, “Watch yourselves” – he says – “that you may receive a full reward”

On first 9 John tells us what to watch for. Progressives. That’s the idea in his description of anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ. The expression goes too far literally means go ahead, to advance. And what was probably the claim that the false teachers made about themselves. That they had advanced in the truth. That was the claim that the Gnostics made. They claim to have truth. And in fact the word gnostic comes from the Greek word, gnosis, which is the word for knowledge, and they claim to have knowledge, they claim to have very

special knowledge. They had knowledge that unlock the secrets of the universe. Knowledge of deep truths. They had progressed in that, they had progressed in knowledge beyond that of the apostles.

But the idea here, as John uses the term and then no doubt was the claim that they made, they're advancing in the truth. The point that John was making is they had gone too far. They had progressed or advance out of bounds. They had moved into error. John says of them. “They don't have God. They claim to know God. They claim to have all the secrets and the mystics and they know the truth.” And he says, “No, they know nothing. They don't have God.” But there's always been something about that kind of claim to special knowledge that has been intriguing and is very seductive. To know the secrets, to possess the secrets, to have the mystics, to be a part of the inner circle, the inner ring, there's an appeal to that. And that was part of their appeal. And John was saying beware of all of that. Don't be enamored of the new and different, it's dangerous.

Charles Hodges, one of the great theologians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one of the great theologians of the church. He taught for many years, 30 or over 30 years that Princeton seminary. He once said, “I have never advanced a new idea and have never aimed to improve on the doctrines of our fathers.” Now he didn't mean by that, that he did in advance in the truth, and had never learned much or never went far into the truth or was discourage in doing that. He did very much. He wrote a three volume systematic theology that still read today. It's an excellent systematic theology, take the time to read it and you'll profit greatly from it. Forget the Latin because you probably can't read it, and it's got a lot of that, but it's a very insightful, helpful systematic theology.

He wrote commentaries. Very good commentaries in the book of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and others, he taught students for years, he preached in churches for years. He gave clarity, not confusion and he did that by staying within the boundaries of God's word of interpreting Scripture with Scripture and developing the fundamentals of the faith, not finding some new idea that no one had thought of before. He stayed within the boundaries of Scripture.

And John here is not suggesting that we not progress in Christian truth. We do, in fact, the church for 20 centuries has been progressing a Christian truth, and as we study will learn more. There's more to be learned from God's word. But it's

within God’s word. That’s how we advance, not outside of it. These men were advancing outside of God’s word. That’s what John is saying. They’re not faithful. They call themselves progressives, they call themselves enlightened and John says they’re deceivers and antichrists.

The one who is truly progressive is the one John says “who abides in the teaching.” That is the teaching of the apostles and prophets. This one - he says – “has both the father and the son.” In other words, he believes in the Trinity. He believes that God is one. There’s one God who exists or subsists in three persons God the father, God the son, God the Holy Spirit. You understand that fully well realize who you’re thinking about your thinking of the infinite, eternal God, how are you ever going to comprehend that? He’s beyond us, but he’s revealed enough for us to know this, there’s one God and their three persons to the God head. And the person who has the truth, who’s in the truth, who has God is the one who believes that, who trusts in him. He has, John says, “both the father and the son” they live within him, and he in them.

So John has said, “Watch out” He’s told us what to look for, and now he tells us what to do. “Shut the door on these men.” That’s really what he says, “don’t let them in.” Verse 10, “If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching do not receive him into your house and do not give him a greeting.” British scholar CH Dodd didn’t like that, he thought that was harsh. That’s how he described it, and he thought this rather uncharitable - he called John’s instruction “fierce intolerance,” “a contradiction of what’s written in the Johannine letters.” He didn’t think that this was John actually. He calls him “The elder of the Presbyterian.”

Now, with all due respect to the scholar, I think it’s - at least in my opinion - a little dangerous to correct an apostle. He may not have thought of him as an apostle, but he is. This is John’s writing and he’s writing to us as an infallible apostle. But also in tolerance of error is not an apostolic it’s not - whatever you want to call it - fiercely intolerant, it’s fierce intolerance of a good kind because it’s of error, and it’s not at all unloving. John was not instructing the church not to help people who were in error about the gospel, or who were confused about a doctrine of theology or a passage of Scripture. John’s referring to heretics. He’s referring to men who are committed to error. And yes, I guess that is fierce intolerance. This is the enemy. This enemy is a pack of ravenous wolves who want to tear to pieces the children of

the chosen lady. So John was not tolerant with them. But John's not saying don't talk to them. He wasn't saying don't have any discussion with them, don't have a debate with them. Those kinds of things don't usually prove very fruitful and I suppose it would be a waste of time.

But he's not saying don't do that. That's not John's point here, though. The point he's making has nothing to do with whether we discuss things with heretics or not. What he's warning against is giving heretics any kind of assistance or endorsement that would help them along the way in their destructive path. So he says if they come to your door seeking hospitality test them learn what they believe. And if they don't pass the test of orthodoxy don't let them in; into your house or into your church. It was common in those days for travelers to seek hospitality in people's homes, the Inns of the first century were generally unclean, flea infested places that were dangerous. So it was a Christian practice to open one's home to itinerant preachers for traveling teachers so that they would be spared the dirt and discomfort of the local in.

John was telling the congregation or telling this family, be discerning, don't open your house to just anyone. If he's not Orthodox close the door to him. But John goes a little further, he says, “And don't even give him a greeting” and while that may seem a little harsh, especially, from the apostle of love John explains his reason for this intolerance in verse 11. “By being hospitable a person participates in his evil deeds in the evil deeds of this heretic.”

A greeting was more than just saying hello or goodbye. The greeting would be interpreted as something of an endorsement on that person, what he or she was doing. It's an expression of goodwill. It's an expression of encouragement. Paul's greetings show that. He would greet people in his letters with words like, “Grace to you and peace” it's really a prayer. The greeting is a prayer for God's grace. It's a greeting for God's peace and prosperity. And really, that's what peace means. The Jews would greet people with “Shalom,” with peace and it means more than absence of conflict in their life, its prosperity. Wishing all of that, upon a person, and that's the significance of a greeting. So giving a greeting could have easily have been interpreted as an endorsement of the person which would only benefit the false teacher in spreading his false gospel.

John's not encouraging, denying hospitality to strangers in need, or being a Good Samaritan or showing compassion for those in distress. I'm sure that if they heretic had been on a side of a road waylaid by some thieves that John what it stopped and rendered aid. What he's warning against here is helping a deceiver. Maybe doing so unwittingly, but helping a deceiver. Helping a wolf in sheep's clothing. You want to be good. You want to be kind, but don't let your kindness facilitate error and help spread that which is detrimental to the church. That's what is worried about. These men were on a mission to ravage the flock of God. They wanted to destroy Christians. Don't help them in doing that.

Now these men, they call themselves Christians. They talk about Christ. They may be very polite people and refine people, but heretics false teachers often are, they're well-educated, charming. But the reality is beneath it all, at the heart of it all they are wolves. Don't let them in your house, John's saying. Their next stop will be the church. Which may be actually included here since the early church often met in people's homes. So, beware, John was saying.

Those Trojans stop the Greeks had gone home and left behind a nice gift, a big wooden horse. But an agent writer wrote, "Sitting within was the enemy bearing death and doom for the Trojans." Beware of Greeks bearing gifts. Beware pleasant preachers who look good, sound good, say the things that we like to hear, who tickle the ears and deny Christ's and alter the word of God. Now we live in a 21<sup>st</sup> century, things are different, we don't worry about itinerant preachers asking for hospitality. But we do face situations that might apply. There are many deceivers, the day as well as there were in John's day. In fact, as I said earlier, probably many more today than then. Some of them come to our doors pattering their cult. Many are professors or preachers denying the incarnation, denying the resurrection, denying the spiritual. Don't be naïve about these things, John is saying. And don't do anything to promote their error. That's the principle of John's lesson.

How we apply that principle is something that we must look to the Holy Spirit. For in order to get the wisdom and the guidance of how to deal with these people at the moment, but this is the principle and the main point that he is making here. What John is chiefly concerned to do here is guard the gospel and protect the sheep, God's children. That's what a pastor does he shepherds the sheet and that's what the elders do with pastors. But I said this before you and I, all of us to some degree have

pastoral responsibilities. We're to love one another. We're to be protecting one another. We're to be helping one another and that's what we do with the truth. Above all, what we seek to do is glorify God. That is love.

When we really live to glorify God and be a blessing to his name we're going to love one another and we're going to do it in the truth. It's going to be an act of love for the truth. Love in the truth. Its love for the Lord, its love for his people. That's to characterize us. We must be as that character in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, valiant for truth. Know God's word and know it well. That is the way to safety and blessing. That's the way to really be men and women who love one another and love the Lord. Our lives are grounded in the truth.

Well, John had a lot more to write, he says that in verse 12. But he wanted to speak these things to them in person he wanted to teach them face-to-face. And he hope to do that soon. But in this brief letter he has given them what he felt was most urgent. “Watch out, be on the alert, wolves are at the door, don't let them in” he ends the letter with a greeting from a chosen sister. Maybe that's the sister of a lady to whom he wrote or maybe if this is a church that he's describing as the chosen lady that this is a sister church and gives their greeting and then he gives a prayer that their joy may be made full. Now that's John's prayer for this assembly, these people. That can only happen as we abide in and on God's word.

We often hear people talk about truth as my truth and your truth as though truth is relevant. We really can't know truth. But I can know my truth and you can know your truth and they may conflict, but we can't really know what truth is. Well, the apostles did. They knew the absolute truth. Jesus Christ knew the truth absolutely, Jesus Christ is the truth, and the Bible is the truth. And as the truth it is our solid foundation in life. We need this truth. We need to believe it. We need to believe that it is the truth, and we need to hold firmly to it. The truth is our sure offense. The truth is our sure foundation for life. We will love one another and will live a life of that character as we know the truth.

Only a few generations after John wrote this letter Christians were being put to death by the emperors for possessing the truth, for possessing the Scriptures. Now that's a common attack that's made upon God's people, attacking the truth, attacking the word of God. Satan hates it, he hates the Bible because it exposes him, but this is what we need for that reason. We need the word of God. We need to love it so much

that we're willing to die for it, as those early Christians did. It reveals God to us. It reveals salvation to us. It's a path, a lamp to our feet and in it we live lives that honor God and are a blessing to one another.

So let me ask you, do you believe it? Do you believe that the Bible is the word of God? Do you believe what it teaches? Do you believe and acknowledge that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh? That he is the eternal son of God who became a man and died for sinners? If you do, if you're trusting in that, in Jesus Christ as Savior, then you have eternal life. It's through faith alone. We receive it by simply trusting in him. Rejoice in that. You're secure in your firm. Guard your position that you're in a safe position, you have eternal life. And if you haven't believe that, if you don't believe that look to Christ. Trust in him. He's the only way of salvation. He's the only Savior. He died for sinners and receives all who come to him. May God help you to do that. Trust in Christ and live for him. May we all do that. Let's bow and a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank you for this brief epistle and the encouragement that it offers. The importance we see of living in truth and love. That is an ongoing thing, produce that within us. Give us a love for your truth. Give us an uncommon knowledge of your truth and the love that comes from that, the obedience and the helpfulness that comes out of that. But Lord, make us cautious. Make us weary of the deceivers that are out there. Help us to recognize error when we hear it, and when we see it and help us to counter it in the right way. Give us wisdom, we pray. And we pray these things in the name of our Savior. Amen.