

2 John

Dr. Charles "Buddy" Parrish
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2 John 1:10-13

Vss. 10-11

- John's words here seem harsh, almost unchristian. Indeed, in John's time hospitality was a key part of the church's responsibility. It would not be unusual to take in perfect strangers and turning away a traveling teacher was unheard of. But we need to remember that the church in John's day was in a fight for its very life. And while the fight against persecution from the Roman authorities was a fight against outside forces, the fight here in John's three epistles is a battle of ideas *inside* the church. As one reads the seven letters to the seven churches in The Revelation, one gets the feeling that the concern in God's Word is not so much about the church falling to outside pressure as it is about inside corruption destroying the church like a cancer.
- John repeatedly calls such false teachers "antichrists" and he does not want to give them any opportunity to get a toe in the door. There is to be no compromise with heresy. Whereas the church's first inclination is to show hospitality, the door should be firmly shut in the face of the wolves in sheep clothing.
- This has been the tension the church has faced from the beginning: how to be in the world but not of the world. Every church everywhere must reflect the culture it lives in. African churches must worship as African churches. Australian churches must worship as Australian churches. But all of that is a matter of style, not substance. The substance must be the same the world over. The trouble begins when the common sin of a given culture creeps into the church. These are the sins that everyone in the culture simply accepts because "this is just who we are." So the battle is joined as the church works to change the culture one convert, one baptism at a time and the culture fights back by seeking to convert the church, trying to get the church to accept its sin so we can all just get along.
- John says to not even greet such people on the street, for to do so is to participate in their evil. And so even today, as the church says NO to this teaching or that, the church is accused of being judgmental and unloving and using hate speech. But how is the shepherd to respond

to the wolf? The shepherd's love is for the sheep only, not for the predators who seek only to lead astray and harm the flock. So we are not to give the wolf, the antichrist, the time of day or any courtesy of any kind, lest we find ourselves lumped in with them as traitors to the Lord.

Vss. 12-13

- In all that John had said there were still “many things” left to say. But some things are best said face to face, not written. Literally, John says he wants to speak “mouth to mouth”, reminiscent of Numbers 12:8 where God said that He had spoken to Moses “mouth to mouth”. In a letter, or an email, or a text the recipient cannot hear the tone, cannot rightly feel the emotion or emphasis with which the author intends. Only when you are speaking directly can people best receive the message. Sometimes it is only when you can look a person in the eyes can a message be truly conveyed. So John, in this battle for the life of the church, does not want to say everything with “paper and ink” but needed to fire off a short letter to plug some holes and stop the bleeding until he arrived to fully address the crisis.
- John began his first epistle by saying that he was sharing all that he had experienced with Jesus and heard from Jesus so that the church could hear and experience it all through him and thus make John's joy complete (1 John 1 :4). It is toward this same sense of joyful unity that John seeks here, knowing that the church still stands on the solid rock of Christ, staying on the same path of following Jesus, rather than have the Chosen Lady's church wander off on a path leading to destruction. To quote John MacArthur, “In an age of relativism and skepticism, the church must remain firmly anchored to the solid foundation of divine truth. There is no place for insipid, shallow, theologically contentless preaching for worship based on emotion devoid of truth, or for tolerating false teaching. There is no virtue in ignorance; no substitute for learning, loving, and guarding the truth. Only by so doing will the church be able to fulfill its divine calling to be the ‘pillar and support of the truth’ (1 Tim 3:15), shining the light of God's truth into the darkness.”
- John concludes with a simple closing that suggests that the letter and its message is not from him alone but from the whole church where he resides.