

2 John

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2 John 1:4-6

Vs. 4

- As was common in Christian letters of the early church, the first word after the greeting is a positive word: “I was very glad...” says John. This practice may have begun with Paul who followed this pattern in most all of his letters, save notably for his letter to the Galatians, with whom he was quite unhappy. I’m told that my grandmother often said, “If you can’t say anything nice, then don’t say anything at all.” John has severe concerns about the church he is writing to here, but he begins on a positive note.
- What exactly John was very glad about is a bit unsure, because the meaning can be taken at least two ways. John was very glad to find that “*SOME*” of the Chosen Lady’s children, these being the members of the church, were “walking in the truth.” It can mean that John had met *some* of the church members, perhaps some who had brought a letter from the church and some support, and was impressed at their faithfulness. John Maxwell and others hold this view. Most commentators however hold that of all the church’s members, only *SOME* were walking in truth. Perhaps John did not previously believe *ANY* in the church were walking in truth and was glad to find that at least some were! In the context of the letter, especially as we read the next few lines, it seems this is more the case. Given what we saw in 1 John, how the Gnostics would come in as wolves in sheep clothing and tear a church apart, perhaps this is what has happened here. Whatever the cause may be, clearly there is division in the church, where two groups are walking in different directions.
- So John is pleased to find that some of the church’s members are “walking in Truth”. To be clear, by “walking” John is using a common metaphor of the early church. How you “walk” is how you live your life. Remember that in those times people spent their day walking. You never had to worry about getting your steps in! If you went to the market, if you went to the community well, or to the river to wash clothes, you walked. You walked everywhere you went. If you were to visit a nearby town 15 miles away, you walked! Literally in John’s time you spent your life walking! How you walked was

tantamount to how you lived your life. And you see this throughout the New Testament. We walk in the light in 1 John 1:7. We walk in newness of life in Romans 6:4. We walk by faith and not by sight in 2 Cor. 5:7. We walk in love in Ephesians 5:2. So John is glad to find some of the people of the church walking the walk, living out their lives in Truth.

- The children are walking in Truth, but never forget that Truth and Love are welded together in the Christian walk. There cannot be one without the other. So they are walking in Truth just as they were commanded to do. And what was that commandment? “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Love, the sacrificial and selfless *agape* love of Christ is the cure for all that ails the church. Christians attacking each other, battling savagely just to win a point in an argument, breaks the heart of God. In John 14:15 Jesus tells the disciples that “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” So when we do not love the sister or the brother there in our own congregation, we fail to love Christ and thereby fail to love the Father. Confession, repentance, and forgiveness are all that is left to us. John spends virtually of 1 John 4 on the subject.

Vs. 5

- “Ask” is too soft of a translation. “I *BEG* you, lady...” John’s heart is breaking and he begs the church to give heed to the commandment of Christ. Not a commandment of his, something new that he has written. No. He is begging the church to remember the very words of Christ that they have had from the beginning. If love fails then all is lost. Some years ago Kathy and I had the privilege to spend time with some of the people who were at the very center of the storm in South Africa when Mandela became president and the apartheid system that had ruled South Africa for 200 years collapsed. The world was expecting a bloodbath, but the bloodbath never came why? Because the church believed that love was more powerful than hate, more powerful than brass knuckles politics, and that the love of Jesus was the only thing that could save the country. And they were right. But this is where I point when I say that Christian love is not an emotion. Christian love is The Way and you when make the decision to pick up your cross and follow Jesus, you are making the decision to love as He loves: to love your enemies, to pray for them and to purposefully do good to those who would seek to do you harm; to forgive unconditionally and completely and to be willing to accept the forgiveness of others; to show mercy when mercy is truly undeserved and

call it Grace. This is costly love. This is the love that produces Righteousness out in the open for all to see. This is the love of Jesus, who forgives those who would crucify Him and genuinely pray for their best future. This is the love that saved South Africa and later Rwanda and it is the love John KNOWS can save the Chosen Lady's church, in fact John knows it is the ONLY thing that can save the church.

Vs. 6

- Again, if we love Him we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). John reiterates this point in 1 John 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome." Keeping His commandments are not burdensome, as the world constantly harps, because we have The Spirit who makes the commandments a joy.

- When John says "commandments" plural, he is more likely pointing to the general commandments of Scripture which call us to obey the Lord. For the Christian, being obedient to the Lord is neither optional nor something done on a part-time basis. John R.W. Stott in his commentary says that, "God has not revealed His truth in such a way as to leave free at our pleasure to believe or disbelieve it, to obey or disobey it. Revelation carries with it responsibility and the clearer the revelation, the greater the responsibility to believe and obey it."

- So John is going back to the commandments of Christ. They KNOW what Jesus said. John KNOWS that only their obedience to the Lord's command will save their church...and save them. Once you KNOW, then to willfully turn your back on God's command is sin. "Of the tree in the center of the Garden you may not eat..." "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."