



Light from the Word

2 John: Rejoicing in the Truth

Editor's note: this month continues a four-part series of teachings from some of the shortest books of the Bible; Philemon, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude.

"I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father."¹

Throughout Scripture God entreats and instructs his children to willingly obey his commandments. We are reminded of the examples of Noah, David, Daniel, Joshua, Deborah, and many others who, in the midst of a world focused on fulfilling its own desires, denied self and their own will and were submissive to God's commandments. Each of these patriarchs and matriarchs of faith had to make the critical daily decision not to love the world, or the things that are in it,² but rather to trust in God with all of their heart, not relying on their own understanding, allowing God to direct their path,³ walking in truth.

While thousands of years have passed since the times of the Israelites and two thousand since Jesus walked on earth, Christ's teachings still ring true, *"If you love me, keep my commandments."⁴* Jesus taught his followers how to fulfill the purpose of the Levitical law—which had hundreds of laws for many different situations—when He taught his disciples: *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."⁵*

We are encouraged in 2 John, to know of the great rejoicing of our Heavenly Father, and in our spiritual family, when we love one another as Christ did. We are reminded that this Christ-like love is not

measured by great human acts devoid of love, even if we would bestow all of our goods to feed the poor or give our bodies to be burned,⁶ but rather is shown by the fruit of the Holy Spirit living in our hearts, action compelled by love. It is exemplified by giving a cup of cold water to those who are thirsty, a shoulder for the tears of the hurting, or by speaking the truth of the Gospel in love to those who are lost. It is not something that happens on rare occasions, but is the calling of each believer, every minute of every day the Lord gives us. The believer with spiritual vision behaves as the Good Samaritan who, as he passed by and saw someone in need, *"had compassion on him, went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him."⁷* This example of love—not worrying about our own needs, but the needs of the others—reflects the love of Christ in our hearts and causes the Father to rejoice.

So with such clear teaching and a wonderful example in Jesus Christ—the Word that was made flesh and dwelt amongst us⁸—why does the believer struggle? What is it that distracts us from walking in truth? Paul reminded us that while we have been called unto liberty, we are not to use this liberty for an occasion to the flesh.⁹ Satan approaches us as a wolf in sheep's clothing.¹⁰ Temptation doesn't always come in a way that is obviously wrong. We are taught to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good. Although we live in time of relative peace and plenty, we are warned not to be complacent, nor *"tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."¹¹*

This deception often starts in the little things of life, changing the focus of our lives from trusting in God to a life focused on fulfilling our own desires. This can show up in accepting a little of the

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world's thinking in our lives, e.g. dwelling on what we don't have vs. counting our blessings, or rationalizing that, "Everyone else is doing it, so it is ok." Unchecked, such deception will continue, not only in ways of thinking that are inconsistent with Scripture as mentioned above, but growing into a hardening of the heart that rejects the opportunity to help one in need or withdraws from healthy fellowship. We may think, "He/she isn't my responsibility," or we may neglect prayer or reading of the Word, due to "not enough time in the day." We may be less faithful in attending church functions due to indifference, or we may fail to see our own sin, or to forgive and forbear with others. Ultimately, as our connectedness to the body of Christ is diminished, our reliance on the Holy Spirit wanes also.

Our focus may be diverted from "*considering one another to provoke unto love and to good works,*"¹² towards comparing ourselves amongst ourselves, and trusting in our own works. This is not wise.¹³ Rather than fall into these traps, let's be inspired with the example of Christ, who saw a world of scattered sheep and focused on their needs.

So, how are each of us doing? The test of our love for God is measured by our trust and obedience in Him—that He will provide us all that we need, and that His will is best for us. We know that, if we trust Him and if we are not just hearers but doers of the Word,¹⁴ this faith-based action results in a happiness in our lives,¹⁵ as well as God's blessing.¹⁶ Just as John rejoiced when he observed "*thy children walking in truth,*"¹⁷ as this unfeigned Christ-like love for all mankind is expressed in every aspect of our lives, it leads to the "astonishment" of those who come in contact with us. They no longer

see us, but rather Jesus Christ, as we are crucified with Him, living in us. It is His love, the fruit of the Holy Spirit living within us that can draw all men to the truth.

*"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."*¹⁸

(Footnotes)

- ¹ 2 John 4
- ² 1 John 2:15
- ³ Prov. 3:5&6
- ⁴ John 14:15
- ⁵ Matt. 22:37-40
- ⁶ 1 Cor. 13: 3
- ⁷ Luke 10:33
- ⁸ John 1:14
- ⁹ Gal. 5:13
- ¹⁰ Matt. 7:15
- ¹¹ Eph. 4:14
- ¹² Heb. 10:24
- ¹³ 2 Cor. 10:12
- ¹⁴ James 1:22
- ¹⁵ John 13:17
- ¹⁶ James 1:25
- ¹⁷ 2 John 1:4
- ¹⁸ 1 John 4:7

1 John 5:13

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.