

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, November 6, 2024 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



THAT YOU MAY KNOW – A STUDY OF 1,2 & 3 JOHN *Prescription for a Healthy Church – Part 2* 2 John 7-13

“¹The Elder, To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, ²because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: ³Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. Walk in Christ’s Commandments ⁴I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. ⁵And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning; that we love one another. ⁶This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.” – 2 John 1-6 (NKJV)

“⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. ⁸Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. ⁹Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; ¹¹ for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. ¹²Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. ¹³The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen” – 2 John 7-13 (NKJV)

BACKGROUND AND SETTING FOR 2 JOHN:

(1) **TITLE = 2 John** - The epistle's title is "2 John." It is the second in a series of 3 epistles that bear the Apostle John's name.

Characteristics:

- **2 John is a conventional letter** - Second and Third John present the closest approximation in the NT to the conventional letter form of the contemporary Greco-Roman world, since they were addressed from an individual to individuals
- **One of the shortest letters in the New Testament** - Second and Third John are the shortest epistles in the NT
- **2 John contains less than 300 words in the Greek** - each containing less than 300 Greek words
- **2 John could fit on a single papyrus sheet** - 2 John could fit on a single papyrus sheet

(2) **AUTHOR = The Apostle John, "The Elder"** - The author is the Apostle John. He describes himself in 2 John 1 as "The Elder" which conveys the advanced age of the apostle, his authority, and status during the foundational period of Christianity when he was involved with Jesus' ministry

(3) **DATE = A.D. 90-95** - The precise date of the epistle cannot be determined. Since the wording, subject matter, and circumstances of 2 John closely approximate 1 John (v. 5 [cf. 1 John 2:7; 3:11]; v. 6 [cf. 1 John 5:3]; v. 7 [cf. 1 John 2:18–26]; v. 9 [cf. 1 John 2:23]; v. 12; [cf. 1 John 1:4]), most likely John composed the letter at the same time or soon after 1 John, ca. A. D. 90–95, during his ministry at Ephesus in the latter part of his life.

(4) **RECIPIENT(S) = Elect land and her children (local house-church)** - The strategic difference is that while 1 John has no specific individual or church specified to whom it was addressed (1 John was most likely a circular letter), 2 John has a particular local group or house-church in mind (v. 1). The individual addressed in the greeting (v. 1) inadvertently or unwisely may have shown these false prophets hospitality, or John may have feared that the false teachers would attempt to take advantage of her kindness (vv. 10, 11). The apostle seriously warns his recipient (and us as his readers today) against showing hospitality to such deceivers (vv. 10, 11). Although his exhortation may appear on the surface to be harsh or unloving, the acutely dangerous nature of their teaching justified such actions, especially since it threatened to destroy the very foundations of the faith (v. 9).

(5) **PURPOSE = Warning of Gnostic false teachers** - Second John deals with the same problem as 1 John (see Introduction to 1 John: Background and Setting). False teachers

influenced by the beginnings of Gnostic thought were threatening the church (v. 7; cf. 1 John 2:18, 19, 22, 23; 4:1–3). The focus of 2 John is that the false teachers were conducting an itinerant ministry among John’s congregations, seeking to make converts, and taking advantage of Christian hospitality to advance their cause (vv. 10, 11; cf. Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9).

(6) HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL THEMES = Back to Christian basics - The overall theme of 2 John closely parallels 1 John’s theme of a “recall to the fundamentals of the faith” or “back to the basics of Christianity” (vv. 4–6). For John, the basics of Christianity are summarized

Summary of Christian Basics: (in 2 John)

- **Adherence to the truth (v.4) -**
- **Practice of love (v.5) -**
- **Walking in obedience (v.6) -**
- **Biblical guidelines for Christian hospitality** – This is a key point of this short letter. The apostle, however, conveys an additional but related theme in 2 John: “the biblical guidelines for hospitality.” Not only are Christians to adhere to the fundamentals of the faith, but the gracious hospitality that is commanded of them (Rom. 12:13) must be discriminating. The basis of hospitality must be common love of or interest in the truth, and Christians must share their love within the confines of that truth. They are not called to universal acceptance of anyone who claims to be a believer. Love must be discerning. Hospitality and kindness must be focused on those who are adhering to the fundamentals of the faith. Otherwise, Christians may actually aid those who are attempting to destroy those basic truths of the faith. Sound doctrine must serve as the test of fellowship and the basis of separation between those who profess to be Christians and those who actually are (vv. 10, 11; cf. Rom. 16:17; Gal.1:8, 9; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; Titus 3:10).

INTERPRETIVE CHALLENGES IN 2 JOHN

Challenges:

- **Ecumenism** – (*ek - que - men - ism*) Second John stands in direct antithesis (opposition, contrast, reverse) to the frequent cry for ecumenism (the principle or aim of promoting unity among the world’s Christian Churches... one world church) and Christian unity among believers.
- **The balance between love and truth** - Love and truth are inseparable in Christianity. Truth must always guide the exercise of love (cf. Eph. 4:15). Love must stand the test of truth. The main lesson of this book is that truth determines the bounds of love, and as a consequence, of unity. Therefore, truth must exist before love can unite, for truth generates love (1 Pet. 1:22). When someone compromises the truth, true

Christian love and unity are destroyed. Only a shallow sentimentalism exists where the truth is not the foundation of unity.

- **Who is the elect lady and her children?** - The reference to the “elect lady and her children” (v. 1) should be understood in a normal, plain sense referring to a particular woman and her children rather than interpreted in a non- literal sense as a church and its membership. Similarly, the reference to “the children of your elect sister” (v. 13) should be understood as a reference to the nieces and/or nephews of the individual addressed in verse 1, rather than metaphorically to a sister church and its membership. In these verses, John conveys greetings to personal acquaintances that he has come to know through his ministry.

“¹The Elder, To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, ²because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: ³Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. Walk in Christ’s Commandments ⁴I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father. ⁵And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another. ⁶This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.” – 2 John 1-6 (NKJV)

“⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. ⁸Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. ⁹Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; ¹¹ for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. ¹²Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. ¹³The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen” – 2 John 7-13 (NKJV)

The word **heresy** sounds outdated nowadays...

- It smacks of arrogance, because to accuse someone of heresy implies that *I am right and he is seriously wrong*.
- It also assumes that there is such a thing as definable truth and error in the spiritual realm.
- But in our day, spiritual “truth” is subjective and relative. If it’s true for you, that’s cool. But I have my own spiritual “truths” that work for me. So who are you to accuse me of heresy?

But before we put *heresy* in the museum as a relic from the past, we need to think carefully. There is one huge factor that renders *heresy* a valid concept, namely, the fact that *God is* and that He has revealed Himself to us through His written Word. If God exists, not as a projection of men's minds, but as the eternal Sovereign Creator of the universe, then He is the ultimate and final standard of truth. And if He has spoken to us in His Word, then as Jesus said, His Word is truth (John 17:17). Either Jesus was mistaken or lying, or God's Word *is* truth. Any deviation from His Word on core matters, such as the person and work of Jesus Christ or the way of salvation, is heresy.

➡ In his interesting book, *The Cruelty of Heresy*, Episcopalian bishop, Fitzsimons Allison, writes, (listen close to what he says and see if we can get at what he is saying) "We are susceptible to heretical teachings because in one form or another, they nurture and reflect the way we would have it be rather than the way God has provided, which is infinitely better for us. As they lead us into the blind alleys of self-indulgence and escape from life, heresies pander to the most unworthy tendencies of the human heart. It is astonishing how little attention has been given to these two aspects of heresy: its cruelty and its pandering to sin." (Italics his)

Some questions to consider from this quote:

- (1) *He says, "We are all susceptible to heretical teaching in one form or another..." Do you agree with this or not? Explain your thoughts. If you agree, why do you think we all susceptible to heretical teaching?*
- (2) *He says we are "all susceptible to heretical to teaching" because they nurture and reflect the way we would have it rather than the way God has provided. What do you think He means by this statement?*
- (3) *In what ways do heresies pander to (try to gain, seek to secure, work to obtain) the most unworthy tendencies of the human heart? (Note: he mentions self-indulgence and escapes from life as two) Remember in the first part of the quote he spoke of heresy reflecting the way we would have it be rather than the way God has provided.*

2 Parts to 2 John:

For the church to be healthy...

- (4) **The church must be sensitive to the life within (2 John 1-6) -**
- (5) **The church must be on guard to the dangers without (2 John 7-13)**

We looked at the first part last time. We will consider the second part in verses 7-13 tigus weej...

As we saw last week, the apostle John was very concerned about the truth. He uses the word five times in 2 John 1-4. I believe that John wrote this short letter to a church under the cryptic salutation "*the chosen lady and her children.*" His main concern

was false teachers who were traveling around, posing as Christians, but denying core truth about the person of Christ. John calls them deceivers and antichrists (v. 7). The danger was that the churches might welcome these men into their midst and provide hospitality for them. John intended to visit this church in person, but before he came he wrote this short letter to warn them against welcoming these dangerous men.

His letter gives us a prescription for a healthy church. Last week we saw (2 John 1-6) that for the church to be healthy, she must be sensitive to the life within.

2 Things Involved in Being Sensitive to Life Within: (*For a church to be healthy it has to be sensitive to a life within*)

- (1) This involves making sure that all in the church have come to a **personal saving relationship with the Father through the Son** -
- (2) It also involves **walking in the truth, in love, and in obedience to Christ's commandments** -

In 2 John 7-13, John goes on to show that...

KEY THOUGHT: *For the church to be healthy, she must be on guard to the dangers without*

These false teachers originally arose from within the churches, but they had left, showing their true colors (1 John 2:19). Now, they were coming back to recruit followers. Invariably, every false cult that goes under the banner of "Christian" veers from the truth on the person and work of Jesus Christ. They may deny His humanity or His deity or His substitutionary death on the cross for sinners. Every cult denies that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. So **false teachings lure us in by appealing to our pride, telling us that we can save ourselves.**

Biblical Definitions of Sinful Pride:

- (1) **A desire to be God (Isaiah 14:13-14)** – ***"¹³ For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'"*** A passage comparing the fall of the King of Babylon to the fall of Lucifer (Satan) and what lead to their downfall and collapse
- (2) **Moral self-righteousness (Luke 18:10-14)** – ***"¹⁰ Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' ¹³ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you,***

this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

(3) Confidence in one's accomplishments (Daniel 4:28-37) – *“²⁸ All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹ At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. ³⁰ The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” ³¹ While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! ³² And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.” ³³ That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws. ³⁴ And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. ³⁵ All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, “What have You done?” ³⁶ At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.”*

(4) Ambition for prominence (Mark 10:35-45) – *“³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.” ³⁶ And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” ³⁷ They said to Him, “Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.” ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” ³⁹ They said to Him, “We are able.” So Jesus said to them, “You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; ⁴⁰ but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared.” ⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. ⁴² But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. ⁴⁴ And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

- (5) **Lack of teachability (1 Peter 5:5)** – *“⁵ In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”*”

Pride is a dangerous and grievous sin. It can be egregious yet inconspicuous. Because it is so deceptive, we are often oblivious to our pride. Awareness of pride is essential since it hinders our relationship with God and set us up (make us especially susceptible) .

There are 6 forms of pride taught in Scripture that we must recognize. Because we expect pride when we succeed, the first three forms are more obvious. Since we don't expect pride when we fail, the second three forms are less conspicuous.

6 Forms of Pride in Scripture:

- (1) **Self-exaltation: Pride gives credit to himself** - When a person succeeds and gives himself credit, he is prideful. This is the athlete who yells, “I am the greatest.” God reminds us that every good thing comes from him. *Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.* (James 1:16–17) Our human tendency is to credit ourselves when we succeed. We attribute our physical beauty to our healthy diet and consistent exercise. We believe our work ethic created our financial success. We applaud our kindness for our many friendships. Jesus warns that God will humble those that exalt themselves. *Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.* (Matthew 23:12) Everything good comes from God. We contribute nothing. God accomplished everything, including everything that pertains to our salvation. *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* (Ephesians 2:8–9) Never exalt yourself. Self-exaltation is the first form of pride.
- (2) **Self-promotion: Pride welcomes credit from others** - Instead of exulting himself, some let others exalt him. But accepting credit from others is another form of pride. When we put forth our virtue and success so that others complement us, we are being prideful. Jesus chided those who paraded their righteous behavior to promote attention. *Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.* (Matthew 6:1–2) Never promote yourself. Self-promotion is the second form of pride.
- (3) **Self-justification: Pride expects credit from God Himself** - We should resist seeking applause from other people. Likewise, we should avoid seeking God's admiration. Expecting credit from God is another form of pride. You may be troubled by this statement, so let's review the logic. There is nothing honorable or virtuous within

ourselves. We are utterly sinful, and God's wrath abides on us. We are in need of God's mercy (not getting what we deserve) and grace (getting what we don't deserve), not His praise (God, you are so lucky to have us!). Christ's substitutionary death on the cross is the only reason we avoid God's anger, punishment, wrath and judgment. He bore our guilt, and he credits us His righteousness when we place our trust in Him. Consequently, our fellowship with God is restored because of Christ's imputed righteousness. God promises us heavenly reward, but our right standing and our capacity to obey is solely through Christ's work of salvation and his enablement through the Holy Spirit. The thought that you can earn God's approval by your actions is a deadly form of pride. Through Scripture, we know that God does not seek this type of worshipper. God is looking for a person who recognizes that he is spiritually destitute. He has nothing to offer. He comes to God as a beggar pleading for grace he does not deserve. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3) We have peace with God because he freely gave us that position through Christ. If we believe our right standing with him comes from ourselves, our self-justification becomes self-righteousness. Jesus illustrates this truth when describing a Pharisee who expected commendation from men and God himself. *Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get." But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.* (Luke 18:10–14) Never justify yourself. Self-justification is the third form of pride.

**these final three are probably less obvious and not often mentioned and therefore may be our greater threat of pride... some might even identify these as "false humility" the opposite of humility is prideful (that is a nice way of saying "pride")*

(4) Self-degradation: Pride tears himself down - The next three forms of pride are subtle since they are disclosed in failure. Many don't expect to find pride in their hearts when they are failing. In fact, people often view failure as an opportunity for humility. A common phrase when you lose is "eating humble pie." When you tear yourself down, did you know that you are being prideful... that is actually a form of pride that we hide behind. You are prideful because you are self-absorbed. You are focusing on yourself. You are pre-occupied with yourself. Pride is ultimately self-preoccupation. A prideful person thinks about himself. He is ambivalent to others, and he forgets Christ. So instead of rejoicing in the success of others and trusting in God's sovereignty, a prideful person concerns only himself. A humble man forgets about himself and focuses on God and others, while a prideful person is pre-occupied with himself. The great secret to humility is not to focus on yourself at all, but to fill your mind and heart with the glory of God

revealed in the sin-conquering death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Never degrade yourself. Self-degradation is a fourth form of pride.

(5) **Self-demotion: Pride compares himself to others** - A prideful person can degrade himself privately, or he may demote himself publicly. This is a fifth form of pride. Self-demotion is announcing that you have performed worse than others. You convince others that you are less or you have less. You argue in public that compared to others, you are inferior. You create a “pity party” for yourself. The reason self-pity does not look like pride is that it appears to be needy. But the need arises from a wounded ego and the desire of the self-pitying is not really for others to see them as helpless, but as heroes. The need self-pity feels does not come from a sense of unworthiness, but from a sense of unrecognized worthiness. It is the response of unapplauded pride. It is ego begging for a compliment. Self-demotion is another form of self-promotion. When you castigate yourself in front of other people, you are fishing for affirmation. You want others to reaffirm, “No, you are not a loser; you are a winner.” Placing yourself as inferior to others is another form of pride. You might even change your comparison to make yourself feel superior. By looking for someone else with whom to compare yourself, you can puff yourself up. The line of reasoning goes like this: even though I’m worse than you, I’m still better than him. Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man... It is the comparison that makes you proud: the pleasure of being above the rest. Once the element of competition is gone, pride is gone. The practice of comparison and competition welcomes the temptation of pride. Guard against comparing yourself with others to make yourself look good. Don’t seek attention and affirmation from others by making yourself look inferior. Never demote yourself. Self-demotion is a fifth form of pride.

(6) **Self-condemnation: Pride judges himself** - The sixth form of pride is private, manifesting itself in times of personal failure. It does not seek the affirmation, approval, and admiration of others. Instead, this form of pride occurs when a person condemns himself because he does not meet his own standard. Sometimes we mislabel self-condemnation as depression. We think a person who hopelessly condemns himself is depressed, so we attempt to cheer him up. When we are unsuccessful in changing his mindset, we conclude his depression runs deep. But the man who condemns himself is not primarily dealing with depression. His root problem is pride. The self-condemned person places his perspective, standard, and assessment above everyone else. He resists God’s grace because he denies God is the true source of salvation, blessing, and truth. He refuses the help of others. Compared to his companions and God, he thinks he knows better. The self-condemned person makes himself judge. He seizes the rightful authority away from God and gives it to himself. The humble man relinquishes all desire to pass judgment on himself. He understands that he stands condemned in God’s presence; God has the authority and power to condemn us. So instead of judgment, the humble man begs for mercy. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior

appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior. (Titus 3:3–6) Never condemn yourself. Self–condemnation is the sixth form of pride.

I think that in some way, all of these say that we all have a pride problem in some way, even when we pretend like we don't...

Ask yourself these six questions:

- *Do I exalt myself?*
- *Do I promote myself?*
- *Do I justify myself?*
- *Do I degrade myself?*
- *Do I demote myself?*
- *Do I condemn myself?*

If you answer yes to any of these questions, it's likely you have a prideful, and that is both dangerous and sinful, and it make you extremely vulnerable to heresy, false teaching and being deceived. Replace your pride with God's glory revealed to us through Christ's finished work on the cross.

Since pride is our prevailing sin, we are especially vulnerable. John gives us four ways to be on guard against these dangers without...

4 Ways to Be On Guard Against The Danger of Heresy:

- (1) To be on guard to the danger of heresy, we must be realistic about the deceptive nature of heresy (2 John 7)**
- (2) To be on guard to the danger of heresy, we must watch ourselves, to abide in the teaching of Christ (2 John 8-9)**
- (3) To be on guard to the danger of heresy, we must be careful not to encourage false teachers (2 John 10-11)**
- (4) To be on guard to the danger of heresy, we must maintain fellowship with others who are God's elect (2 John 12-13)**

Let's look at them...

TO BE ON GUARD TO THE DANGER OF HERESY, WE MUST BE REALISTIC ABOUT THE DECEPTIVE NATURE OF IT (2 John 7)

“⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”-2 John 7

Twice John calls these false teachers **deceivers** (v. 7)

- They didn’t come into the church with nametags identifying them as “John Doe, False Teacher.”
- They didn’t have an evil glint in their eyes that warned you, “This guy is evil!”
- They were subtle and they probably used the Bible to back up everything they said.
- Their explanation of things seemed to “make more sense” of doctrines that were difficult to understand.
- They said, “Doesn’t the Bible say that the flesh is bad? Then how could Jesus Christ have come in the flesh? That would make Him evil! So He really didn’t come in the flesh. It just *seemed* that way. What actually happened is, He was just a man who was especially close to God. At His baptism, “the Christ” came upon Him. It departed from Him just prior to His crucifixion. Doesn’t that make more sense than this teaching that nobody can adequately explain or understand, that Jesus is God in human flesh?”

1 John 2:2, “²²Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son. ²³No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”

1 John 4:2-3, “²This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.”

2 John 7, “⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.”

3 Important Truths to Remember About Jesus Coming in the Flesh:

- (1) If you deny that Jesus Christ is God in human flesh, then you also have denied His atoning death on the cross**
- (2) In order for His death to pay for human sins, Jesus had to be fully human, but apart from sin**
- (3) For His death to pay for the sins of the human race, Jesus had to be the eternal Son of God**

➡ As **Bishop Moule** once said, **“A Savior not quite God is a bridge broken at the farther end.”**

John here in **2 John 7** refers to these false teachers as **“deceivers”** and **antichrists** (see also, 1 John 2:18, 22). Four main New Testament texts refer to the antichrist, although not all the

texts use the term (summarized in Colin Kruse, *The Letters of John* [Eerdmans/Apollos], pp. 99-100): Matthew 24/Mark 13; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 1 & 2 John; and, Revelation 12-13.

From these passages, we can conclude that there will be an end times, world-dominating figure called “the Antichrist.” In Revelation he is called “the beast” and he is given frightening power over all the earth. But before he is revealed, there will be many lesser antichrists. These religious figures deceive people so that they will not believe the truth about Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:9-12).

We need to be careful before we label someone as a false teacher, deceiver, or antichrist. It is a difficult call sometimes, because there are various levels of deception, related to the level of the consequences for those deceived. To be deceived about something related to eternal salvation is most serious, because those who fall for this deception will spend eternity in hell!

Other levels of deception may have serious consequences that fall short of eternal judgment. For example, false teaching may lead couples to divorce when sound teaching could have prevented it. False teaching about child rearing can lead to rigid, legalistic practices that damage children emotionally and spiritually. These are serious matters, because the enemy uses all levels of false teaching to damage people. But the most serious false teaching involves the person and work of Jesus Christ and the way of salvation. We must be on guard to the danger of such deceptive teaching.

TO BE ON GUARD TO THE DANGER OF HERESY, WE MUST WATCH OURSELVES, TO ABIDE IN THE TEACHING OF CHRIST (2 John 8-9)

“⁸Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. ⁹Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.”-2 John 8-9

Jesus defined “*abiding in Christ*” when He likened Himself to a grapevine and believers to its branches, “*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me*” (John 15:4). That picture illustrates the vital union existing between Christians (genuine believers) and Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to "abide" doctrinally in Christ?

(1) Abiding in Christ is to remain in Christ - The word “abide” basically means “to remain.” Every true Christian gives evidence that he or she is genuinely saved by remaining inseparably linked to Christ in all areas of life.

- We depend on Him for grace and power to obey.
- We look obediently to His Word for instruction on how to live.

- We offer Him our deepest adoration and praise and we submit ourselves to His authority over our lives.
- In short, Christians gratefully know Jesus Christ is the source and sustainer of their lives.

(2) **Abiding in Christ evidences genuine salvation** - The Apostle John alluded to that when he referred to defected professors who *"went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us"* (1 John 2:19). People with genuine faith will remain--they won't defect; they won't deny Christ or abandon His truth. Jesus reiterated the importance of abiding as a sign of real faith when He said, *"If you abide in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine"* (John 8:31).

(3) **Abiding in Christ doctrinally means a constant adherence to the basic and fundamental truths about Jesus** – A failure to be faithful to the fundamental, sound doctrines of the faith (a proper view of the person and work of Christ, love, obedience) marks a person as having never been born again. The word “abide” has the idea of constant adherence and warns that the fundamentals are not open to change or subject the latest trends or philosophical fads, and that a genuine Christian/believer holds onto/ abides/ remains grounded in those basic doctrine about Christ. What are those doctrine about Christ that we hold to that are essential for our faith and authenticate our faith?

“Christology” is the doctrinal study and understanding of the Person and work of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. There are numerous important questions that Christology answers that identify who Jesus Christ is, and that are essential for genuine faith:

1. **Jesus Christ is more than a prophet, good teacher, godly man** - Who is Jesus Christ? Almost every major religion teaches that Jesus was a prophet, or a good teacher, or a godly man. The problem is, the Bible tells us that Jesus was infinitely more than a prophet, a good teacher, or a godly man.
2. **Jesus Christ is God** - Is Jesus God? Did Jesus ever claim to be God? Although Jesus never uttered the words “I am God,” He made many other statements that can’t be properly interpreted to mean anything else.
3. **Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man** – He is both at the same time. This is called the “hypostatic union” of Christ. What is the hypostatic union? How can Jesus be both God and man at the same time? The Bible teaches that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine, that there is no mixture or dilution of either nature, and that He is one united Person, forever.
4. **Jesus Christ was/is virgin born** – Why is the virgin birth so important? The virgin birth is a crucial biblical doctrine because it accounts for the circumvention of the transmission of the sin nature and allowed the eternal God to become a perfect man.
5. **Jesus Christ is the Son of God** - What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of God? Jesus is not God’s Son in the sense of how we think of a father/son relationship.

God did not get married and have a son. Jesus is God's Son in the sense that He is God made manifest in human form (John 1:1,14).

A Biblical understanding of Jesus Christ is crucial to our salvation. Many cults and world religions claim to believe in Jesus Christ. The problem is that they do not believe in the Jesus Christ presented in the Bible. That is why Christology is so important. It helps us to understand the significance of the deity of Christ. It demonstrates why Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Christology teaches us that Jesus had to be man so that He could die - and had to be God so that His death would pay for our sins. It is perhaps the most important area of theology. Without a proper understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what He accomplished, all other areas of theology will be errant as well.

There are a couple of minor textual variants with the pronouns in **verse 8**, but the reading of the NASB is probably correct. John urges his readers to watch themselves, ***“that you do not lose what we [the apostles] have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.”***

When John refers to ***“anyone who goes too far”*** (v. 9), he is probably alluding to the heretics. They claimed to have superior knowledge that could take you farther in your Christian life than the teaching of the apostles could do. John is sarcastically saying, ***“Yes, in fact the false teachers have gone so far ahead that they have left God behind them!”***

“The teaching of Christ” could refer to the teaching that Jesus Himself gave us, or to the teaching of the apostles regarding Christ. But these two are really the same thing. Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things and bring to their minds the things that Jesus had taught them (John 14:26). Jesus Christ is the focus of both the Old and New Testaments. In the New Testament we have the essential apostolic teaching about Jesus Christ and the way of salvation through Him. If someone comes along and claims to have some “new” teaching that cannot be supported by the New Testament, he is not holding to the teaching of Christ. We need to be on guard against any so-called “new” teaching, including the recent “new perspective on Paul.”

People who do not abide in the teaching of Christ, John says, do not have God at all. By way of contrast, ***“the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.”*** Since “the teaching” refers to the truth that Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully divine, John is saying that those who deny these essential truths about Jesus, but claim to know God, are either lying or deceived. You cannot deny the deity of Jesus and have the Father also (1 John 2:23).

John also may have had in mind Jesus' words (John 14:23), ***“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”*** When you embrace heresy, you necessarily abandon close fellowship with the

Father and the Son. Orthodoxy is not just a matter of holding to biblical truth, but also of walking in fellowship and obedience. Since false teaching appeals to our pride, especially the pride of superior “knowledge,” embracing it invariably means falling into sin. Often false teachers embrace their erroneous views to justify their sinful habits. Embracing the truth would require repentance, which they don’t want to do.

Verses 8 & 9 show that there are two categories of people in view. In verse 8, John refers to those who lose part of their reward, but the implication is that they are truly saved. In verse 9 he refers to those who do not have God at all, and thus are not saved. Salvation is God’s free, unmerited gift to all that will receive it. It is not a reward for anything (Rom. 4:4-5). As John wrote (1 John 5:11-12), *“And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”*

If you have received God’s gift of eternal life in Christ, the Bible teaches that there are rewards for serving Him. Jesus talked about those who have used well what He entrusted to them. They will be rewarded with more at the judgment (Matt. 25:14-28). Paul talks about those who build with wood, hay, and straw, as opposed to those who build with gold, silver, and precious stones. The wood, hay, and straw will be burned and the person will suffer a loss of rewards, “but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (1 Cor. 3:15).

In order to receive the full reward, John commands, “Watch yourselves....” This needs to take place on two levels. On the church-wide level, the elders are charged with guarding the flock from destructive teaching. Paul gives as a requirement for a local church elder that he hold “fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Titus 1:9).

He charged the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28), “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” He went on to warn them (20:30) that even “from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.” He wrote this to the very church that John addressed his first epistle. Paul told Timothy (1 Tim. 4:16), “Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; ...” Again, there is a close relationship between sin and false teaching. If you don’t pay close attention to yourself, so that you fall into sin, you will be prone to fall into false teaching.

This means that if you have a desire to be an elder, you must also have a desire to study and know sound doctrine, so that you do not go astray and so that you can keep careful watch over the flock. This is one reason that I have taught the systematic theology course here, to help equip men who have a desire to be elders. If a man does not know the truth well, he will not be able to guard the flock from the many errors that Satan tries to introduce. Elders

must be men who continually study God's Word, so that they will not fall into false teaching. Elders must guard the flock.

On the personal level, you are responsible to be on guard for yourself against false teaching. Fathers (and mothers) must be on guard for their children. I am sometimes amazed at the way Christian parents allow their children to be exposed to all sorts of bad teaching, without any word of caution or any discussion about how this teaching contradicts the Bible. They let them watch movies with New Age or pantheistic concepts. Some Christian parents even send their kids to religious schools that teach a false gospel! While we cannot shelter our children from all errors, we must be diligent to teach them biblical discernment.

I'm also amazed at Christians who have no concern for sound doctrine. Some argue that since doctrine is controversial or divisive, we should not study theology. Some even think that studying theology could damage your devotion to Jesus! Years ago, I mentioned to an elder (no longer here) that another pastor and I were reading and discussing Berkhof's *Systematic Theology*. He said, "Look out! That stuff can be dangerous!" I was dumbfounded! Needless to say, that elder should not have been an elder!

Thus John says that for the church to be healthy, we must be on guard to the deceptive nature of false teaching. We must be on guard for ourselves, to abide in the teaching of Christ.

TO BE ON GUARD TO THE DANGER OF HERESY, WE MUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO ENCOURAGE FALSE TEACHERS (2 John 10-11)

"¹⁰If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; ¹¹for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds."-2 John 10-11

Remember, John is the apostle of love, who has just re-emphasized the need for us to love one another (v. 5). **But now he says that we should not receive a false teacher into our house or even give him a greeting, because if we greet him, we participate in his evil deeds** (which refers especially to his false teaching). If this letter was written to a church, then "house" may refer to the gathering of the church. But it also may have reference to showing hospitality to these false teachers by giving them food and lodging in the homes of Christians.

We need to clarify several things here...

- First, in that day there were inns, but they were often places of ill-repute, not suitable for the average traveler.
- So the church would extend hospitality to these traveling teachers.

- According to the norms of hospitality, the host was not only giving the guest food and lodging, but also providing patronage, guaranteeing the rest of the community that the guest was a worthy person (Kruse, pp. 213, 215-216).
- If you provided hospitality, you were changing the stranger's status from being under suspicion as an outsider to being a trusted guest.
- Thus John says that we should not even give such teachers a greeting.
- To say, "God bless you," or, "Have a good day," or to call a false teacher, "brother," imparts a blessing or word of encouragement that we should not give
- John is talking about those who promote damnable heresies, not to fellow believers who disagree with us over some non-essential doctrines.

As we have seen, there is an inseparable connection between truth and love.

Biblical love seeks the highest good of the one loved. If a false teacher is actively involved in deceiving people about the truth, so that they go to eternal condemnation, then we are not acting in love to do anything to encourage such scoundrels in their evil deeds. John Stott observes, "If John's instruction still seems harsh, it is perhaps because his concern for the glory of the Son and the good of men's souls is greater than ours, and because 'the tolerance on which we pride ourselves' is in reality an 'indifference to truth'" (*The Epistles of John* [Eerdmans], p. 214; the quote within the quote comes from Neil Alexander, *The Epistles of John, Torch bible commentaries* [S.C.M. Press]). He adds (pp. 214-215), "False teaching ... is not just an unfortunate error; it is a 'wicked work' It may indeed send souls to eternal ruin."

Christian leaders especially must be cautious about any behavior that would endorse or encourage false teachers. Sadly, Billy Graham has not been careful over the years about this. He has had those who deny essential doctrines sit on the platform with him at his crusades. No doubt his motive was to try to reach them, but the impression is that he endorses their ministries. I have heard him and other Christian leaders give glowing endorsements to Robert Schuller, who denies the gospel. This is the sort of thing that John is explicitly forbidding.

Should you invite Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons who knock on your door to come inside and talk?

- If you do, you had better be armed with the truth, because they are well-armed with error!
- Also, do not say or do anything to encourage them in what they are doing. They are actively recruiting souls for hell, and it would be wrong for you to give them any reason to think that you appreciate what they're doing.
- I usually tell them, "I am a pastor and I know the Bible well. If you are seeking the truth, I'd be glad to talk with you. But if you're trying to convert me, you're wasting your time and mine." Not many want to talk further!

- Be careful in a spiritual sense, of what you are inviting into your home. False teaching and heresy is the work of the enemy (the devil) and may be introducing into your home the doctrines of demons
- One more thought here, we are all at different places spiritually. There may be innocent and impressionable ears in your hope that may be influenced in some ways. I hear all the time from supposedly mature believers words of compliment about how wonderful, wholesome, and good the people are who are connected with one cult group or another. That proved a part of their deceptive influence on others.

John's final word is his closing greeting, but it gives us a positive word on how to be on guard to the dangers without:

TO BE ON GUARD TO THE DANGER OF HERESY, WE MUST MAINTAIN FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHERS WHO ARE GOD'S ELECT (2 John 12-13)

¹²Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. ¹³The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen"-2 John 12-13

John mentions his desire to visit these brethren in person and he sends them greetings from *"the children of your chosen sister"* (the church from where he wrote). His aim in visiting and speaking with them face to face was *"so that your [some manuscripts read "our"] joy may be made full."* There is great joy in genuine Christian fellowship, when we share in the things of God with those who have experienced His grace, mercy, and peace (v. 3).

The point is, we don't want to become so paranoid about the dangers without that we cut ourselves off from other churches or individual Christians that love Christ and the truth. If they have come to know Christ in a saving way, then we are members of the same body. We impoverish ourselves and bring dishonor to Christ when we draw the lines of separation too narrowly. We should accept all that Christ has chosen as His own (Rom. 15:7).

I should add that there is a difference between fellowship on an individual level and linking an entire church with other churches. For example, on the individual level, I may have fellowship with a godly Episcopalian. But it would be wrong to link our church with a denomination that endorses homosexual pastors or bishops. So we must pray for discernment in all of these situations.

CONCLUSION

I conclude by giving you two practical applications...

2 Practical and Helpful Applications:

- (1) **Familiarize yourself with the historic creeds and confessions of faith** - Many of these arose out of the need to define sound doctrine in the face of serious errors. To our detriment, Baptists typically have not been oriented towards creeds or confessions. But you should read the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Westminster Confession of Faith, the Westminster Shorter and Longer Catechisms, and the London Baptist Confession of 1689 (a modern English version is on our book table, A Faith to Confess). Teach yourself and your children a good catechism (Spurgeon's or John Piper's: http://www.desiringgod.org/library/what_we_believe/catechism.html).
- (2) **Read some books on sound doctrine** - Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology [Zondervan] is clearly written and very helpful. Or, read Calvin's Institutes. Don't let the length scare you. Make it a year-long project and chip away at it. You will help immunize yourself against the destructive heresies that Satan still uses against the church.