

The Second Epistle of

JOHN¹

[Salutation]

1 The elder, to the elect lady² and her children, whom I love in truth—and not I only, but also all who have known the Truth—2 because of the Truth,³ who abides in us and will be with us into the age: 3 Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from the Lord⁴ Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, will be with you⁵ in truth and love.

[Walk in Christ's commandments]

4 It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we received commandment from the Father. 5 And now I put a request to you, lady (not as though writing a new commandment to you, but one that we have from the beginning): that we love one another. 6 And this is the love,⁶ that we live according to His commandments—this is the commandment,⁷ just as you heard from the beginning, that you should live according to it.

[Beware of deceivers]

¹ Both the translation and the notes are the responsibility of Wilbur N. Pickering, ThM PhD, ©, being based on his edition of the Greek New Testament, according to the only significant line of transmission, both ancient and independent, that has a demonstrable archetypal form in all 27 books. The Greek Text of which this is a translation, and articles explaining the preference, may be downloaded free from www.prunch.org.

² Commentaries are divided between understanding the “lady” to be a specific woman or a local congregation. It seems to me more probable that the clause “also all who have known the Truth” would apply to a congregation—a congregation would be more widely known and loved than an individual woman. The “elect sister” in verse 13 below would be another congregation.

³ I take “the Truth” to refer to the Holy Spirit because of the following clause, “will be with us into the age / forever”—‘truth’ as a package of true propositions could be said to abide in us, but to be with us forever fits better with a Person. The truth is a basic characteristic of the Holy Spirit (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13, Titus 1:2).

⁴ Some 8% of the Greek manuscripts omit “Lord” (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.), but the 92% are doubtless correct. “The Lord Jesus Christ” is now the proper name of Jehovah the Son.

⁵ The Greek manuscripts are about evenly divided between “you” and ‘us’, but the best line of transmission has “you”. I imagine that the difficulty arose from the use of the future indicative with the verb ‘to be’, when the optative or subjunctive would be expected. We expect ‘may mercy . . . be with you’, not the affirmation that it will be. If “in truth and love” is understood as modifying the pronoun, then the use of the indicative is explained. Anyone who is in truth and love will have grace, mercy and peace. Now there you have an excellent motivation for embracing truth and love!

⁶ The Text has the definite article with “love”—from God’s point of view, the way we express “the love” He is looking for (as opposed to any number of other loves) is by obeying Him. The Text has “that we walk . . .”—I render “live” because I take that to be the real point.

⁷ “The commandment” is to live according to His commandments. It is a different way of stating what the Lord said in Matthew 22:37-38. “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment’.” (See also Mark 12:30 and Luke 10:27.)

7 Now many deceivers have come into the world,¹ who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in flesh²—this is the deceiver, even the Antichrist!³ 8 Look to yourselves, so that we not lose the things for which we worked but may receive a full reward.⁴

9 Anyone who turns aside and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God;⁵ but whoever continues in Christ's teaching does have both the Father and the Son.⁶ 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house; do not even tell him, "I wish you well", 11 because whoever tells him, "I wish you well", participates in his malignant works.⁷

[Farewell]

12 Although I had many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; instead I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

13 The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.

The Third Epistle of

JOHN

[Salutation]

1 The elder, to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.

2 Dear one, I pray for you to prosper in every way and to be healthy, just as your soul prospers.⁸ 3 Because it gave me great joy when some brothers came and testified to the truth about you, how you are walking in Truth.⁹ 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in Truth.

[Gaius is commended]

5 Dear one, you are faithful in whatever you do for the brothers, and for the strangers 6 who testified to your love before the church—you will do well by sending them on their way in a manner worthy of God, 7 because it was for the sake of the Name¹⁰ that they went

¹ Some 82% of the Greek manuscripts have "come into" rather than 'go out into' (as in most versions). The 18% presumably have the deceivers going out from the church into the world, but that is not John's point. The deceivers have been introduced into the world by Satan, the original and boss deceiver.

² The Text has "coming", not 'having come', so evidently John is referring to Christ's second coming, which will certainly be "in flesh". Recall the word of the angels in Acts 1:11, "This very Jesus who is being taken up from you into the sky, He will come again in the precise manner that you observed Him going into the sky." The angels are emphatic; the return is going to be just like the departure. I take it that the Lord will return with the same glorified human body, visibly, come out of a cloud, and His feet will touch down at the same spot where they left (see Matthew 24:30, "coming on the clouds", and Zechariah 14:4, "His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives").

³ John is affirming the real source of the idea that Christ will not return in bodily form.

⁴ Some 17% of the Greek manuscripts put this verse in the 2nd person plural throughout (as in NIV, NASB, TEV, etc.), but the 83%, including the best line of transmission, are correct. John is concerned about the results of his labors (see 1 John 2:28), as was Paul (1 Thessalonians 2:19).

⁵ If you turn aside, you are out. "Does not continue" can only refer to someone who has been 'in'.

⁶ As in verse 3 above, John emphasizes that the Father and the Son are distinct Persons.

⁷ People who do not believe and teach what Christ taught are on the other side. To be malignant is to be aggressively evil. Obviously, we should avoid anything that might be interpreted as identification with such people.

⁸ This prayer challenges me. Do I really want my physical health to be a reflection of my spiritual health?

⁹ There is no article with "truth" here (or in verse 4). To love someone in truth means to truly love, presumably, but to walk in truth does not mean to truly walk; a different meaning is required—the principal candidates would be God's Word and the Holy Spirit.

¹⁰ Users of the AV and NKJV are accustomed to 'His name', which is based on some 15% of the Greek manuscripts. I take it that the 85%, including the best line of transmission, are correct in reading "the Name".

out, accepting nothing from pagans.¹ 8 We therefore ought to welcome such, so that we may work together for the Truth.²

[Diotrephes is criticized]

9 I wrote to the congregation, but Diotrephes, who wants to dominate the others, does not acknowledge us.³ 10 So if I come, I will bring up what he is doing, slandering us with malignant words. And not satisfied with that, not only does he himself not receive the brothers, but he forbids those who want to do so, kicking them out of the congregation.⁴

[Demetrius is commended]

11 Dear one, do not imitate what is bad, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.⁵ 12 Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone—even by the truth itself. Yes, we also speak well of him, and we know⁶ that our testimony is true.

[Farewell]

13 I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; 14 rather I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.

Peace to you. The friends *here* greet you. Greet the friends *there* by name.

Both readings refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, presumably, “the name which is above every name” (Philippians 2:9), and at which every knee shall bow.

¹ The word rendered “pagans” is often translated ‘nations’ or ‘Gentiles’, but in this context the reference is not to nations, nor to non-Jews. The reference is probably to non-Christians. But what of the principle involved here? It seems clear that John is in agreement with the decision not to accept financial support from unbelievers. Would this be because of possible ‘strings’ attached, or is something going on in the spiritual realm? But really, who wants to tell a donor that he is a sinner?

² John is talking about giving hospitality, a place to stay and food to eat, but also about giving a good send off.

³ I believe this is the main reason for this letter—since Diotrephes censored the letter that John wrote to the congregation, he now writes to an individual, to get around the censorship. Unfortunately, Diotrephes-types are still with us, and not even unusual.

⁴ One wonders where he got the power or authority to be able to do this. Evidently people were letting him get away with it.

⁵ John is good at making flat statements, which most of us find to be uncomfortable, because we would like to think there are exceptions. Don’t unbelievers do good things? If a pastor does something bad, does that mean he does not know God? Just as all truth is from God and all lies are from Satan, all genuine good is from God and all evil is from Satan. I imagine that John would insist that anyone who has really seen God will not do evil.

⁶ I follow the best line of transmission here, using the first person, albeit representing only 23% of the manuscripts. We expect the second person (61.5%; there are two further variants), and it would be almost unthinking for copyists to make the change, but on reflection the first person makes good sense. Indeed, in John 21:24 the same author uses ‘we know’ with reference to his testimony.