

“For the Sake of the Truth”

February 5, 2012

Text: II John 1:1-3

In his Sunday morning sermon on Sept 14, 1856,

**Chas. Spurgeon said this to his London congregation in
Park Street Chapel=>**

“This is a day of strife—a day of division—a time of war and fighting between professing Christians! God be thanked for it! Far better that it should be so than that the false calm shall any longer exert its fatal spell over us! The time is come when we must know who are for the Lord and His truth—and who are on the side of error!... Whatever divisions we may live to see, let it still be known that for God and His Truth we are prepared to hold our ground at any expense or at any risk!”

What ultimately followed became known as the “Downgrade Controversy” and it resulted in such bitter attacks on Spurgeon that it cost him his health.

Today, once again we must acknowledge that “this too is a day of strife.”

Like the people listening to Spurgeon that day in 1856, most Xns today are only vaguely aware of it—if at all.

James MacDonald, pastor of Harvest Bible Chapel in Chicago, has a program he calls The Elephant Room, in which he discusses controversial topics w/i the Xn Church.

In a recent Elephant Room discussion, he and Mark

Driscoll of Mars Hill Church in Seattle (an Emergent church), interviewed TD Jakes, a television evangelist & pastor of The Potter’s House in Dallas (megachurch).

The following is from Jakes' statement of faith regarding the
Trinity=>

“There is one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in three **manifestations**: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

A very significant alteration has taken place here, a significant departure from what the Church has always believed.

Instead of “existing in three **Persons**” (the orthodox interpretation of Scripture adopted by the Church 17 centuries ago), Jakes has substituted “existing in 3 *manifestations*,” which was part of a 3rd century heresy called Modalism, long since rejected by the Church, at the Second Council of Smyrna.

Modalism is the belief that the Father/Son/H.S. are not 3 distinct Persons, but only 1 divine Person manifesting Himself in different ways (modes), at various times, & in various places.

Because Mark Driscoll is a leader of the Emergent Church, it was no surprise that he was unwilling to really confront this issue and identify it as doctrinal error.

“Emergents” doubt that Xns can ever really know the truth about any doctrinal issues at all.

But surprisingly, even James MacDonald didn't take a very strong stand either, against Jakes' modalism.

MacDonald's disappointing response went something like this=>

“I don’t know that he’s a modalist, and even if he is, I believe in the Trinity as always understood, but I believe the Bible is somewhat vague on it, and therefore, I’m not going to impose my Trinitarian theology on somebody else” (a characterization by Todd Friel—Xn radio host).

Many Xns, listening to this would prob. react by saying,

“Please, just stop all the fighting.”

Spurgeon would have said=> “God be thanked for the fighting.

That’s better than a false calm in which Satan is allowed to quietly sow heresy in the Church, undermining the truth on which we stand!”

I personally thank God there are people who can/will confront it.

To those who argue, “We’ll never be able to build up the Church

if we keep bickering among ourselves,” I would answer=>

Jesus said, “*I will build My church,*” so that’s not our job.

Ours responsibility is to teach Truth to the Church X is building.

That doesn’t mean Xns should go around looking for a fight.

We are to reject heretical teachings decisively, but we are to do so calmly, and w/ love.

Jakes says, “It is not the oneness of God for which I cry,
it is for the oneness of His people.”

He’s implying that his modalistic doctrine of God is not so important that he’d jeopardize church unity over it.

But that’s exactly what he’s done, & he shows no inclination to stop teaching that ancient heresy.

True unity is based on sound doctrine, so if doctrine is sacrificed, there can be no real unity.

If Mr. Jakes truly believes God is one Person (not 3), he should be crying out for the “oneness” of God, and possibly even join w/ others who believe that same doctrine.

But he needs to re-examine his theology in light of biblical truth, not just what he was once taught.

Like the church from which he came, Mr. Jakes continues to teach Modalism, tacitly denying the Trinity.

Church leaders must point out lovingly, but as firmly/decisively as possible, there can be no unity between those who hold irreconcilable views on such basic/crucial doctrines as the Trinity.

We can't simply end the matter w/ hugs all around, agreeing to disagree, and wishing them Godspeed.

Last time, we saw that if we abandon what the Bible teaches about God, & vary from its statements about Him in any way, we create a false concept of God—an idol.

At that point we become no different from idolaters, which God Himself views as a critical issue.

We found in our study of 1 John, that the Apostle John had to confront a heresy about Jesus X, & he didn't hesitate to do it.

Pre-Gnostics were teaching that X was just an ordinary man.

They said the “X-spirit” descended on Him at His baptism.
John confronted this heresy, insisting that the orthodox view of
X’s nature is one of 3 basic tests for true Xnity.

He said true Xns believe Jesus is God the Son of God, so
those who don’t believe that, aren’t truly Xns.

Throughout 1st John, he opposed the false teachers and their
teachings, w/ point-blank directness.

**Today we begin a study of 2 John, in which the Apostle will
correct an undiscerning church for giving aid/comfort
to those who teach false doctrines.**

Specifically, for giving them a place from which to
propagate their heresy, providing them free
room/board.

This morning we will consider only the introduction of that
epistle.

John will use the traditional style/format of a 1st cent. Gk
letter, indicating the writer, the recipient, & a
greeting;

Then he’ll indicate why he has written this letter=>

“For the sake of the truth.”

In this introductory section, John will also explain that,
although he instructs Xns to withhold hospitality from
false teachers, his epistle is written=>

* With Love, * For Truth, * In Joy.

John wasn’t a hothead, looking for a fight.

He was a man who loved the Church and fervently wanted to protect it from the ravages of false teaching.

* **2nd John Is Written With Love**

[2 John 1:1]=> “*The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth,*”

John wrote this in a spirit of humble/tender love.

He called himself simply, “*The elder.*”

He could have sounded important, calling himself “The Apostle.”

He was, after all, the only surviving Apostle.

He was a legend in the Church, having been one of the inner circle of Apostles, who witnessed the Transfiguration, the one who sat next to Jesus in the Upper Room and leaned against Him, the one who called himself “the disciple Jesus loved.”

But John humbly dispensed with all such status-seeking nonsense and called himself simply “*the elder.*”

He was an old man by this time, so the title really fit him.

He & his brother James had once sent their mother to Jesus, asking if they could sit on His right/left in the Kingdom.

But he had grown up spiritually since then, and now he was content to be known simply as “the elder,” by those among whom he ministered.

And they recognized him by that title.

Peter had used the same title, referring to himself in

I Pet 5:1 as “*your fellow elder.*”

Next, John identified the recipients of this letter=>

“The chosen lady and her children.”

Commentators disagree over whether this was an actual lady (a woman).

I would side with those who believe it was John’s familiar term of endearment for a church.

If that’s a correct interpretation of his words “*her children*” would refer to the members of that particular church.

In the same, the residents of Jerusalem were called, “the daughters of Zion” or “the daughters of Jerusalem.”

* That’s the conclusion I come to, because John’s language seems inappropriate for an individual.

E.g. his asking her to recall the commandment “*which we have had from the **beginning**, that we **love** one another*” (vs 5).

If this is addressed to a literal lady, it sounds either like an indirect accusation of an unloving attitude;

Or like a personal appeal to win the lady’s affection.

* Moreover, if this is a literal woman, & John is writing to her children a/w/a her, verse 4 sounds strange=> “*I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth.*”

I.e., What happened to rest of you reprobates?

It seems more like that John had heard about some people in a church who had left it, and were no longer walking in the Truth.

* Finally, in 3 Jn 1:9, John says=> “*I wrote something to the church,*” which may be a reference to this letter—2 John. The point being that he wrote it to a church, not to an individual woman.

This church is “*the chosen lady*” in that she is made up of true Xns—the elect, chosen by God, called by His grace, redeemed, and made part of His eternal family.

John now adds an important personal note=> “*...whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth.*”

“*I*” is emphasized.

The heretics who were endangering their souls with false doctrine about Jesus, really didn’t love the Xns in this church.

John forbade the church members to even house such false teachers.

But even in that, he spoke out of his love for the people in the church, not from hatred of the false teachers.

Notice how John loves them=> “*in truth.*”

* He loves them w/ all sincerity (i.e., in truth).

* But more importantly, he loves them because of their common commitment to “*truth,*” which the context would justify our translating “*the truth.*”

And all true believers share this same commitment to
the Truth.

Not only John, but all who know the truth, love this church
referred to as the “*chosen lady*” because they stand
together with her in the truth.

Their love isn’t based merely on personality factors that
enable them to get along well together.

It’s based on their “like precious faith”—they are held
together in love, by the bond of truth.

They share the same understanding/perspective of the world.

* They share the same feelings of love for their
Lord/Savior, something which is totally foreign to
those who are in the world, as part of the world, and
therefore don’t know the Truth.

* They share an awareness of God’s provision in their
lives, His protection, and sometimes His discipline.

* They all know what it is to struggle with their flesh.

* They also share the world’s rejection and persecution.

Being members of God’s family, they have all these experiences
in common, binding them together, and dividing them from
those who don’t know/believe, the Truth.

* **2nd John Is Written for the Truth**

[Verse 2]=> “*for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will
be with us forever:*”

“*For the sake of the truth,*” John says, “I am writing this letter.”

He was concerned his readers were compromising the

Truth in the name of a mistaken sense of hospitality.

“Truth” appears 5 times in these 1st 3 verses, clearly making it the emphasis of John’s words here.

It was the truth that bound John to this church in love.

His was a love that focused on character;

But more than that, it was a love for others based on their commonly shared love for the truth of God.

The sphere of John’s love, and of all Xns’ love for all other believers, is the truth revealed in God’s Word.

That’s what binds us to every other believer, which is why heresies like Modalism are so dangerous.

* Our salvation is the result of our faith in the truth.

* We all love the truth (II Thes 2:10).

* It is the truth that has set us free.

* We all worship in Spirit/truth (Jn 4:23-24).

* We meditate on the truth (Phil 4:8), obey the truth (I Pet 1:22), speak the truth (Eph 4:15).

* Our whole lives are defined by the truth, so 2 Jn 4 can describe us as people who “*walk in the truth.*”

Our God is a God of truth (Psa 31:5);

Our Savior is “*the way, & the **truth**, & the life*” (Jn 14:6).

The H.S. who has indwelt us is the “*Spirit of **truth***” (Jn 14:17).

What exactly does John mean by “*the Truth*”?

Jesus answered that in Jn 17:17=> “*Thy word is **truth.***”

The Truth is everything written in God’s Word.

It is a unified system of truth—not truths, but The Truth.

God’s truths are connected together like a chain into a unified truth, which honors God, glorifies Jesus X, and humbles man’s pride.

The Truth is ontological reality as it is described in the Bible—all its perspectives/values, all its precepts/testimonies, which reveal to us how/why God created this world, and how we are to live w/i it.

It is the mind/counsels of God, made known to men.

Living according to the Truth results from learning to view the world & one’s whole life as God does, and as He created it all, according to His own eternal purposes.

Jesus X lived His life by walking in the Truth—perfectly.

He obeyed God’s Law w/o failure, even fulfilling it on our behalf through His death/burial/resurrection.

And as a born-again believer emulates Jesus’ example, he too lives/walks in the truth.

The H.S. brings the truth home to that believer’s heart, teaching him God’s truth, which witnesses to his spirit that God’s Word is not only true, it is “The Truth” (the final criterion and ultimate source of Truth).

Does every newborn believer fully understand all biblical Truth?

No, but he understands enough of it to realize that he was once a sinner facing God's judgment.

He also understands that forgiveness was made available to him by God's grace as he placed his faith in Jesus X.

This is The Truth at its most foundational level, and he will spend the rest of his life expanding that understanding, as he learns more/more of God's Word.

But now that he has the foundation right, everything he builds on it, will be right as well.

Q: What's the difference between a fact being true, and this thing called "the Truth," revealed in God's Word?

Man has experience with several kinds of truth—scientific, historical, logical, mathematical, intuitive, and subjective. Each of these is open to debate/interpretation.

But "*the Truth*"—the revealed truth of God—is superior to every other form of truth, simply because God said it.

It needs no evidence to prove it, there is no appeal against it, & there is no room for man to doubt it.

It is true because God has created/shaped reality in such a way, that it is necessarily true, by divine decree.

Whatever is true, is true, because He designed it that way.

It's also true in the sense that it is more eternally important than any fact whose only truth holds, for time alone;

Not for eternity also.

Everything else we think to be true, even if it really is true,
is insignificant by comparison to “*The truth,*” which
is eternal.

We may get away w/ ignoring the truths
discovered/declared by scientists, historians,
philosophers, and law-makers.

But we dare not ignore God’s truth, about which Heb 12:25
says=> “*If those did not escape when they refused
him who warned them on earth, much less shall we
escape who turn away from Him who warns from
heaven.*”

The Truth is so vitally important that John directed those who
know the Truth not to give aid/comfort to those who
deny/pervert it;

Those about whom he’ll write in vs 10=> “*If anyone comes
to you & does not bring this teaching, do not receive
him into your house, and do not give him a greeting.*”

John points out in vs 2, that the truth stays in/with us forever.

It has become so much a part of us—the way we
think/live—that no one could ever take it from us.

Professed Xns whose faith is not genuine will leave the Church.

They’ll be among those mentioned in 1 Jn 2:19=>

“*They went out from us, but they were not really of
us; for if they had been of us, they would have
remained with us;*”

They may stay in the church as long as they can, in their
own strength, but ultimately they’ll discover there’s

no compatibility between what they actually believe,
and The Truth which genuine Xns believe.

Like the seed in Jesus' parable, their "faith" in X will die,
having fallen among weeds/thorns of
worry/temptation;

Or having fallen on rocks of affliction/persecution.

Those who overlook doctrinal differences in the name of a naïve,
unbiblical/nondoctrinal concept of unity, are trying to help
nonbelievers hold onto a faith they've never really had.

They inevitably end up compromising the Truth of God's
Word on which true unity depends.

* **2nd John Is Written in Joy**

**The truth of God is full of principles that are great cause for
joy in the believer's heart.**

We see that in John's greeting.

[Verse 3]=> "*Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God
the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in
truth and love.*"

Grace, mercy, peace, truth, and love.

What could ever give a person greater joy than blessings
like these?

The typical greeting of a Gk letter was *charein* ("Greeting!").

Xns modified that to *charis* ("Grace!") as a play on words that
celebrates the fact that we are saved by God's grace.

They then added a few other words to their greetings reminding their readers of the other blessings of our salvation.

In this case, John mentions God's "*mercy*" and the "*peace*" that's ours, having been reconciled to God.

When other NT writers used such words in their greetings, they took the form of a prayer or a wish.

E.g. 1 Pet 1:2=> "*May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.*"

But John uses them as a statement of fact=> "*Grace, mercy and peace **will** be with us.*"

* "*Grace*" is God's love, expressed to the guilty/undeserving.

By all rights, we deserved nothing but God's wrath.

Instead, He graciously reached out to us in love despite our unworthiness.

* "*Mercy*" is His love expressed to the needy/helpless.

We were God's enemies & being spiritually dead, were helpless/incapable of reforming ourselves.

But Eph 2:4 says=> "*God, being rich in **mercy**, because of His great love with which He loved us, / even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ*" (2:4-5).

* "*Peace*" is the restoration of God's loving relationship

with man, due to Jesus' sacrificial atonement for sin.

It is the blessedness of acceptance by God, due to His grace/mercy, working on our behalf.

Even as these words roll off our tongues, they excite feelings of joy in our hearts because we know the incalculable value of these treasures we have received from God.

And we know that God has given them all to us a gifts of His infinite love for us.

They come to us “*from God the Father and from Jesus Christ.*”

God the Father initiated the whole process, having chosen us before the world began and set His love on us long before we even existed.

Jesus, the Son of God, paid with His life, to satisfy the Law on our behalf, opening the door to God’s mercy/grace to us.

John uses the word “*from*” twice, Once before “*God the Father*” and once before “*Jesus X the Son.*”

John is making a very strong point=> They are both God, equally God, They both played a key role in our salvation, and They are each separate Persons.

Separate but equal—not the same Person, manifesting Himself in 2 different modes, as Modalism teaches.

The main string of thought in verse 3 is that “Grace, mercy, and peace *will be with us... in truth and love.*”

It is the absolute truth which God has delivered to us, and He has given us that truth as a gift, out of His love.

In Eph 4:14, Paul instructs us, that we too must hold tenaciously to the truth, but we must do so in love=>

*“We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; / but speaking the **truth in love**” (14-15).*

Jude 3 tells us to “*contend earnestly for the faith.*”

But even as we contend, we’re to do it in love.

When Modalists or any other false teachers, rise up in the Church, we cannot simply ignore them, because Satan will use them to trick/deceive untaught spiritual “children” of the faith.

But we are to confront their error as God has confronted our sin=> “*in love*”—calmly/gently/decisively.

Love grows soft/weak apart from the backbone of Truth, so we dare not give untruth any place to hide in the Church.

But neither are we free to champion Truth in a harsh, or bitter, or unloving manner.

“For the Sake of the Truth”

February 5, 2012

Text: II John 1:1-3

1. This is a day of strife; like the people listening to Charles Spurgeon in 1856, most Christians today are only [16 vaguely] aware of it—if at all.
2. We are to reject heretical teachings decisively, but we are to do so calmly and with [10 love].
3. Today we begin a study of Second John in which the Apostle will [16 correct] an undiscerning church for giving aid and comfort to those who teach false doctrines.

Although John instructs Christians to withhold hospitality from false teachers, his epistle is written with love, for the sake of the truth, and in joy...

*** Second John Is Written With Love**

[2 John 1:1]

I Pet 5:1

4. John identified the recipients of this letter: “*the chosen lady and her children,*” John’s familiar term of endearment for a [14 church].
II Jn 1:5, 4; III Jn 1:9
5. Not only John but all who know the truth [10 love] this church referred to as the “*chosen lady*” because they stand together with her in the truth.

*** Second John Is Written for the Truth**

[Verse 2]

6. “*Truth*” appears five times in these first three verses clearly making it the [18 emphasis] of John’s words here.
II Thes 2:10; Jn 4:23-24; Phil 4:8; I Pet 1:22; Eph 4:15; II Jn 1:4; Psa 31:5; Jn 14:6, 17
7. What exactly does John mean by “*the Truth*”? The Truth is everything written in God’s [10 Word].
Jn 17:17
8. “*The Truth*”—the revealed truth of God—is superior to every other form of truth simply because [8 God] said it.
Heb 12:25; II Jn 1:10

9. The truth stays in us and with us forever; it has become so much a part of us—the way we think and live—that [6 no] one could ever take it from us.

I Jn 2:19

* **Second John Is Written in Joy**

10. The truth of God is full of principles that are great cause for [8 joy] in the believer's heart.

[Verse 3]

Eph 2:4-5

11. These words excite feelings of joy in our hearts because we know the incalculable [12 value] of these treasures we have received.

Eph 4:14-15

12. Love grows soft and weak apart from the backbone of Truth, so we dare not give untruth any place to hide; but neither are we free to champion Truth in a harsh, bitter, or [20 unloving] manner.