

## Gratitude for the Faithful

### 2 John 1-4

Our text today comes from the second general epistle the apostle John wrote. Along with the gospel that bears his name, and Revelation, John also wrote 1, 2, and 3<sup>rd</sup> John. It is believed to have been written around AD 85-95, near the end of John's life.

John's second epistle had a two-fold purpose. First, he wrote to encourage the "elect lady" to love all believers, regardless of their attitudes or behavior. Apparently, she had taken a firm stand for truth and sound doctrine against false teachers, and some within the church had criticized her stand. John knew the importance of loving others as we do ourselves, even if they had wronged us or were speaking against us.

Secondly, John wrote to encourage the lady to remain steadfast in her stand for truth in doctrine. He admonished her to keep false teachers at bay, even refraining from allowing them entrance into her home. She was not to respond hatefully, but she was not expected to offer hospitality or accommodate those spreading false doctrine.

John spoke of the difficult balance we continue to face in our day. We must love others as we do ourselves, seeking to be an effective witness for the Lord. However, we must also be bold in our stand and commitment to truth. We cannot cower under the tide of public opinion, refusing to stand for the Lord in order to gain the favor of men. We must be gracious and compassionate, but we must also be courageous and bold for the faith.

As we begin to study John's second epistle, I want to consider the [elements](#) of John's greeting as we discuss: [Gratitude for the Faithful](#).

**I. The Salutation** (1-2) – In the opening verses we discover the gracious salutation John offered the lady he held in such high esteem. Consider:

**A. The Elder** (1a) – [The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth](#). John does not refer to himself by name, but simply as "the elder." This spoke of the position he held within the church and the responsibilities associated with his position. The word "elder" is translated from the word *presbuteros*, and gives us our English word presbytery or Presbyterian. It could refer to a senior member of the church, [1 Tim.5:1](#), but usually spoke of one who held a pastoral role in the church, a position of authority and oversight of the church. This is the title that John held among the church.

- We must bear in mind that this time in history was five to six decades beyond the crucifixion. John would have been an aged man, the last remaining apostle. No doubt, he was widely known and respected among the church at this time.

**B. The Elect Lady (1a) – The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth.**

Having identified himself, John then addressed the lady to whom the letter was written. Like his identification, John does not mention her by name, but simply referred to her as the “elect lady.” This speaks of one who is “elect or chosen.” Clearly, John is writing to one known for her relationship with Christ and faithfulness to Him.

- There is some debate as to whom John actually wrote this second epistle, since she is not specifically named. Some believe that John wrote to a particular woman, who had raised children in the faith, and they too walked with the Lord. Among those who hold this view, some think he may have written to Mary, the mother of Jesus. Others think John’s reference to the “elect lady” and her “children” referred to a local body of believers, with the “lady” being the church, and the believers being described as “children.” The truth is, we simply do not know with certainty. Regardless of whom John addressed the letter, the application does not change. The truths he shared would certainly apply to a mother and her children or to a local body of believers.

**C. The Expression (1-2) – John expressed his affection for the elect lady and her children.**

Through his expression we see two distinct elements:

➤ **John’s Love** – [whom I love in the truth](#). John affirmed his love for the lady and her children in the truth, referring to the truth of Jesus Christ, the foundation of the Christian faith. He used the word *agape* to describe his love for her and the children. He loved her with godly love – love that is without bounds and unchanging. His love for her and the children was settled and motivated by the common truth they shared. She and the children were born again in Christ Jesus, settled and standing firmly in the faith. John shared their faith and commitment to truth. As she stood against those who sought to undermine the truth with false doctrine, she was encouraged that John loved her in the truth, and supported the truth for which she stood.

➤ **The Church’s Loyalty** – [and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;](#) <sup>[2]</sup> [For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.](#) John further encouraged her in sharing the loyalty and love of the church for her and the stand she had taken for truth. Those who had experienced truth stood with her in her commitment to the truths of the faith. John reveals this was a natural reaction. All believers were indwelt with truth that abides forever!

**II. The Intercession** (3) – *Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.* John goes on to reveal the prayer he prayed for the lady and her children. Notice:

**A. The Request** (3) – *Grace be with you, mercy, and peace.* This is not unusual for John, being an elder within the church. Naturally he desired those who stood for truth, striving to faithfully serve the Lord, to experience grace, mercy, and peace. He well understood the difficulties they faced, and knew these blessings from the Lord would aid their struggle for the faith.

- I am certainly thankful to have received these blessings. Where would we be apart from the Lord's grace, mercy, and peace? John MacArthur said, "*Grace views sinners as guilty and undeserving; mercy views them as needy and helpless; peace is the result of God's outpouring of both.*" As believers in the finished work of Christ for our salvation, we should desire all to experience such grace, mercy, and peace – especially those within the church.

**B. The Reminder** (3) – *Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father.* John reminded them of the source of these blessings – they came from God the Father, and from His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. No doubt they were aware of this, but in times of difficulty and despair, it is good to be reminded from whom our blessings flow. Grace, mercy, and peace had been given of the Lord. These were not gifts provided by the world, and they need not fear an adversary being able to take or destroy these blessings. God's grace, mercy, and peace would remain regardless of what they faced. (We too can rest in these blessings, being assured they will remain!)

**C. Their Reception** (3) – *Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.* John also offered a challenge to be remembered. God is not stingy with His blessing, but in order to receive them, the church must abide in truth and love. Their hearts and minds must be fixed on the truth, being committed to remaining steadfast in the faith, regardless of circumstances. They also must abide in the love of Christ – being committed to loving Him and loving others. The blessings of God were available, but they must abide in truth and love in order to receive them.

- This fundamental truth transcends time. Like the church of old, we too must abide in truth and love. We cannot expect to enjoy the blessings of God if we refuse to stand firm upon the truth and submit to its authority in our lives. We cannot expect God to bless us if we fail to abide in love for our Lord and one another!

**III. The Jubilation (4)** – As John concluded his greeting, he spoke of the great joy the elect lady and her children had brought him. Consider:

**A. The Discovery (4a)** – *I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth.* John knew the lady and her children personally. Whether this was an actual lady and her children or a faithful church, the outcome is the same. John had observed their lives and witness, discovering they walked in truth as she did. This must have encouraged the aged pastor greatly. He had given his life to the cause of Christ, and rejoiced that generations who followed his were grounded in the faith, walking in truth.

- The challenge for us is two-fold. As parents, we have an obligation to instill the truth of Christ in our children. They will receive some instruction through the church, but ultimately, we are responsible to teach our children the truths of the faith. I cannot blame anyone for the spiritual condition of my children. I am responsible to guide them in the faith!
- We must also do all we can to ensure the health and vitality of the church, encouraging and equipping those babes in the faith to become stable, mature believers. The Lord has entrusted us with the care of this congregation. I pray we will do all we can to ensure it remains strong for future generations.

**B. The Devotion (4b)** – *I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.* While John was grateful, and she was to be commended for her faithfulness in teaching her children, she had not done anything that was not expected. Those in Christ are admonished to teach their children of the faith. She was responsible to instruct them in the faith, and she had been obedient to God's command.

- I trust John's greeting will serve as a challenge for each of us. Being committed to the Lord and teaching our children is not optional. We are commanded to instruct them in the ways of the Lord, teaching them the truth of the Gospel. This is quite challenging when we pause to consider it. If my children served the Lord as I do, what type of Christian would they be? Have I done all I could to set the right example before them? Have I shared and lived my faith in front of them? Would they desire what I possess? I want to be more like my Lord and have a greater impact on my children, including my spiritual children!

**Conclusion:** What type of letter would John have written had he been writing to us? Would he have rejoiced in our faith or admonished our lack? This has challenged me to seek a closer walk with Jesus in order to make a stronger impact for the faith. If there are needs, come to Jesus!