Please turn in your Bible to II John, and let’s read this together.

“The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever. Grace, mercy and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father’s Son in truth and love.

I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father. And now I ask you, dear lady – not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning – that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.

Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete. The children of your elect sister greet you.”

If you have never read a book in the Bible, guess what? You just did. That is the book of II John. And I am excited about this series that we are doing called ‘One Hit Wonders.’ The idea behind ‘One Hit Wonders’ is to explore the five books in the Bible that are only one chapter each, namely II John, III John, Philemon, Jude and Obadiah. And I felt as though it was apropos to start with II John being that we have just completed I John last week.

The word Bible means book, and in reality the Bible is one book that includes 66 books. You have 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament, totaling 66 books. These books were written over a 1500 year period on three different continents, Europe, Asia and Africa, and by 40 different authors. It was primarily written in the Old Testament in Hebrew and in the New Testament in Greek with a little bit of Aramaic sprinkled in here and there, like in Daniel, or when Jesus says ‘tetelestai’ which means ‘it is finished.’
And the Bible is written in different genres, such as poetic, epistolary, historical or apocalyptic literature. So when we approach the Bible, it is multi textured. And the beautiful thing about the Scriptures is it was written by some 40 different authors. It was written, as I said, over this long stretch of time. But there is one driving theme running through the Scriptures, and it is this – that we are separated from God, but God’s love is on a crash course collision with humanity because He came to redeem us, and to save us from our sins.

So now we come to this letter known as II John. And by means of introduction, what can I tell you about this letter? Let me give you a few insights. Let me kind of just help you to get a mental framework for understanding this letter. The authorship wasn’t even contested until the 20th century. So that is to say, for the first 19 centuries it was believed to be John. And it only began to be contested in the 20th century. So I am perfectly comfortable going with John as the author of II John.

John is the author of five books in the New Testament, namely the gospel of John which is the last of the four gospels, then you have I John, II John, III John and the book of Revelations. Those were all books written by John. And John, in this particular letter, doesn’t identify himself as the author; however we get an authorship in different ways. Sometimes another author will give it away. Other times what will happen is early church fathers help us. For instance John was the disciple of a gentlemen by the name of Polycarp. And so by looking at Polycarp, and looking at some of the people who Polycarp influenced, and going back and looking at some of the external witnesses that were outside of the Scripture, looking at some of the evidences, looking at some of the literature that we have, we can see people attesting to John being the author of John, I John, II John, III John and Revelations.

And you see in II John that he identifies himself as the elder. Now what do we do with this word ‘elder?’ Well, we know that the Bible teaches that churches are to be overseen by elders. But when it is referring to leadership, it is always in the plural. Like in Titus Chapter 1, or in I Timothy Chapter 3, or where we see in the book of Acts the elders are working in oversight, it is in plural.

However the word elder here is singular. So it is probably referring to John’s older age, that is his season of leadership, the elder one. And then what does he say? He talks about the elder and then he says, “To the lady and her children.” Now you guys are looking at me, and I want you to be looking at II John and verse 1. And John identifies himself as the elder, and then he says who his audience is – “To the lady and her children.”

So what is John doing? Is he writing this to some elderly woman who has a bunch of kids? No. Probably the best way to understand this is John is an older
individual writing to a local church that he refers to as a lady, and the children are the members. In fact the church is referred to as the bride of Christ on one occasion. So it was common to use language like the Bride of Christ, and in this instance the lady and her children. And so John, the older one, the elder, is writing to a local church, the lady, in this particular letter of II John.

And so at the outset we can learn a little bit about who this individual is. John is an older individual who is writing to a church, and that was very common. When you read the New Testament you see that the authors would often identify themselves at the very beginning, as Paul and Titus did. They reveal their name and then they even say who their audience is. Peter does the same thing. And we can see it right away. So what are we seeking to do? We are seeking to understand the message of II John, and then we are going to try to apply it to our lives.

What is the message of II John for today? In order to start building a proper framework, we start asking who the author is. Then who is the author writing the letter to? So you look first inside the Bible, which would be your internal evidence. What is the purpose of this book? In II John the purpose of this letter is to teach us that we are to walk wisely. And I am going to share three ways that we are to do so. We are to walk in love, we are to walk in truth and we are to walk in discernment. We are going to see those three elements unfold in II John. So what is II John about? It is about walking wisely. And what are the three ways to walk wisely? We need to walk in truth, we need to walk in love and we need to walk with discernment.

So see how much we are already beginning to learn here. We are putting the framework together and it is kind of like opening up a puzzle box, dropping out all the pieces, and now we are beginning to put the framework together. So John is the author, John is writing to a church, and this letter was more than likely written in the 90s. It is very plausible that it was written earlier because some scholars would date all the New Testament being complete before AD 70. But I am comfortable even taking it into the 90s.

So what we have here is a ‘One Hit Wonder.’ We have a hit from the 90s. And it is not the 1990s, this is AD 90. And if I was going to ascribe a name to this book, if I was going to give it a title, I would call it ‘Walk This Way,’ and I would say, ‘I beat you to it,’ to Steven Tyler, who is the lead singer for Aerosmith and who wrote the song ‘Walk This Way.’

Here we are in this situation where we get this idea of ‘walk this way.’ John is saying this is the way we should walk. And he is going to teach us then how to walk. And when we say walk we are talking about how to live, how to live our life. Don’t you want to know how to live your life? Don’t you want to know what God has in store for
us? Well guess what? We can learn in this letter today together. Now the length of this letter is very short. It is about the standard length of common letters that would be written in ancient times. They would write on papyrus and this letter would be about a page of papyrus. III John is also about the same length. Remember at the beginning today we read the entire book, and we are going to do that for all five books.

How then shall we live? How does God want us to walk? How do we walk in the way that pleases Him? Well, first we walk in truth. With all eyes fixed on II John, we now read verse 1 again. “The elder to the elect lady and children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, because of the truth that abides (rests, dwells) in us and will be with us forever.” Truth will not be erased.

Then he looks at this blessing that we have as believers. “Grace, mercy and peace will be with us.” How great that sounds. God’s grace will be with us forever. We will always be people marked by mercy. And peace will be with us. “From God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father’s son, in truth and love.” So he says in truth and love, and now he is going to go in and give us an up and close look at truth and love.

But first, staying on the theme of truth in verse 4, he says, “I rejoiced greatly to find some your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.” So we are commanded by God the Father to walk in the truth. But there should be a proper response, John says, to knowing that people are walking in the truth. And what is that response? It is joy. John says, I rejoiced greatly, to see they were walking in the truth. What a great thing for us to consider that one way we as Christians can discover joy in our lives is to look at people who are walking in the truth. John found joy in watching people walk in the truth.

You may say, ‘But Bobby, I am struggling in the joy department lately. I could use an injection of joy.’ If so, go get up next to someone who walks in the truth and guess what? You can begin to experience joy. One of the reasons we were so miserable is because we are not hanging out with people who are walking in the truth. John said, “I rejoiced greatly,” to hear that they were walking in the truth. So one of the secrets to your joy is to go find people walking in the truth. Now we don’t consider that very often, do we? ‘I need some joy. I will call up Joe. Joe, are you walking in the truth? Then let’s get some coffee together.’ And then go out and order a four shot expresso and then you can have a double joy, a joy of expresso and a joy with Joe. So that is the key.

Why don’t people walk in the truth? We ought to answer that question. Frankly, many people don’t know the truth. They are not really exploring the truth, they are not looking into the truth. Sometimes people just want to fit in rather than stand out. And it is easier to just kind of fit in with other people and to go with what is popular. But God invites us to stand out in the truth. He wants us to be willing to be proud in a good
humble kind of way for being a Christian, and in a thankful kind of way. Sometimes people don’t walk in the truth because it is too much work to learn the truth. They don’t take time to learn the truth. They don’t know the truth. And you can’t walk in the truth if you don’t know the truth. So we have a problem.

Now if we are going to walk in the truth, we have to know the truth. And if we are going to walk in the truth, we have to be willing to stand out for the truth. Because the truth invites us to be salt and light kind of people. That is the invitation we will get. Not only that but we often don’t walk in the truth because we want our own way. We want to go the way of our emotions. We want to go the way of our desires. We want to go the way of our dreams. But guess what? Healthy emotions come from walking in the truth. Healthy desires are desires that are aligned with God. Healthy salt life is a life wrought out by God.

So we are looking at some of the reasons together of why we don’t walk in the truth. And let me just mention one more reason. It is because when we walk according to the truth we may have to pay a price, a price tag of being excluded, a price tag of looking weird, a price tag of even having the risk of persecution.

I was so delighted to watch the news yesterday, and regardless of what you think about the overall decision, that is not what I am even remotely getting into here, just regardless of that. I rejoiced that Saeed Abedini and four other prisoners have been freed from Iran and they are coming back home. In particular, we have prayed as a church for Saeed Abedini. And I have prayed for him countless times over the last several years. I saw his wife in her passion go on a crusade to see her husband free. And I thought what an amazing wife she is. And now he is coming home!

And Saeed has walked in the truth. He didn’t forsake Jesus. He experienced a tough price. He was persecuted. He was ridiculed. He received death threats from ISIS and others. And now he comes home. And guess what? There will not be a more sought out Christian in the United States than Saeed Abedini. Those of us when we think about suffering - and sometimes the first thing we think about suffering is how to get out of it instead of asking God ‘What can I get out of this?’ We want to escape it.

I will tell you this. I guarantee when Saeed gets back, and I am sure the wife and kids will have lots of tears, but they will see God’s wisdom in allowing that experience, because think of the platform that Saeed Abedini is going to have right now. Now he will be able to come to America and to inspire and to encourage people. Just think about the authority that he is going to speak with, after all that he has gone through. He is going to be the most sought after Christian by radio stations, by television, by publishers and by churches. And this is a good kind of being sought after as a person who has been faithful and walked in the truth.
So I have shared with you why some people don’t walk in the truth. So now I think it would be appropriate to ask - what about you? Do you feel as though you are walking in the truth? Or do you think you would rather fit in than stand out? Or would you rather do something else than learn the truth? Are you thinking to yourself, ‘It is just too much work, and I don’t really want to grow in the truth. Just give me a little scratch every Sunday for church, and I am really more concerned with what is going on in culture. So just whet my appetite a little bit, just give me fifty cents of God, Bobby. I just want enough to feel like God and me are okay.’

Or maybe you feel like you are struggling with worrying about the price you would pay if you walked in truth. So you seek to make your Christian life cozy, comfortable, sheltered and quarantined. Of the reasons I am bringing out, do you want to go your own way? Or do you want to walk in the truth? Do you want to be in the truth as He is in the truth? Do you want to know Him? Don’t you want to have the great heart pounding to express itself in God’s direction?

Now I have answered the question and given some reasons why we don’t walk in the truth. But perhaps I should now try to tell you what the truth is. Jesus described Himself as the truth. Philosophers talk about the correspondence theory of truth. What do I mean by that? The correspondence theory of truth – don’t let that phrase throw you. I am going to give you a definition of what truth is. Don’t you want to know what that is? A correspondence theory of truth is ‘that which corresponds to reality.’ Truth is that which matches reality.

Maybe you think that doesn’t really help you much. So let me develop this more. Bobby Conway is Chinese. Is that true? No. Bobby Conway is Caucasian. Is that true? Yes. That truth claim corresponds to reality. ‘Bobby, what a fine looking woman he is.’ Is that true? If you say yes, you are in trouble. No, that is not true. Bobby Conway is a man. So the truth claim corresponds to reality.

Now how do we get at truth? God created the universe. And that is true if it corresponds to reality. Bobby is preaching on a stage in southern California right now. That is not true. It is a statement, but it needs to be tested. Bobby Conway is preaching in North Carolina right now. And that is true because it corresponds to reality. Do you want to know what the passion of my heart is? I want to know truth. We are living here on earth with one life to live. So that is time that we should be pursuing truth. That is what we need to be about. God created the universe. Is that truth? Some would say no. What would we do then? I am going to look at the evidences. Everything that begins to exist has a cause. The universe began to exist; therefore the universe has a cause. I just gave you the cosmology argument for the existence of God.
And I will look at other things. I will look at DNA evidence. I will look at what some scientists refer to as Irreducible Complexity and the Anthropic Principle. I will look at fine tuning arguments for the existence of God. I will look at the moral argument. Some will even look at Saint Anselm Ontological Argument. Others will contest that argument. I will look at the Teleological Argument from Design. What am I doing while your head is spinning around? I am just giving you information that helps me to see in my test case to see if the truth that God created us responds to reality.

Jesus rose from the dead. Is that the truth? He rose from the dead insofar as that truth claim corresponds to reality. Well, what do we begin to do then as Christians? We look at the difference in the disciples who could hardly follow Him in His earthly ministry, and then they would go and die martyr’s deaths afterwards. What happened? They saw Jesus. We have eye witness testimony. We have 500 people on one occasion who claimed to see Jesus. His body was never discovered. So I start looking at this case for Christianity in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and faith begins to swell up, but it is a reasonable faith. I realize that I can trust that claim.

So therefore we have God’s word that we are to walk in the truth. Now this begs the question – what truth is John talking about here? “I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth.” What truth? Remember they didn’t have the New Testament. All they had was II John and a few other letters that had been sent to them at this time. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, they would have had the letter to the Corinthians and they would have had the Old Testament. When the Philippians received their letter, they would have that and the Old Testament. Possibly they would have heard about some other books or letters.

Or take the Galatians for example, when the northern region of Galatia got the letter that was circulated amongst them, that was all they had. So what truth did they have? They were walking in the truth. What truth? The truth they heard at first which was the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were walking and living out the belief in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

In the same way when a missionary goes to the 10/40 Window and shares the gospel, they get the gospel, but the missionary doesn’t have the expertise to translate the entire Bible into their language to help them to know everything, so what do they have? They have the truth that they heard, they have the gospel, but they don’t have all books of the Bible.

Do you know how blessed we are to have all the books of the Bible? Do you know how blessed we are to be able to read the books of the Bible? And to be able to see the truth, and learn the truth, and grow in the truth? And isn’t it wonderful to know that even if you were to go into the 10/40 Window, the most unreached areas of the world and
just share Jesus, that a person could have their sins forgiven? And they could walk with God through the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. Though they wouldn’t have as much revelation as we do, they could certainly walk in a way that pleases God.

Now there is a lot here. Perhaps you have never even thought about those types of things. That is why it is important for us to keep learning, to keep growing, asking questions and thinking. Flannery O’Connor said this about truth. “The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it.” See truth is timeless. Two plus two is four. Is that true or false? That is true. What if I said, ‘I think two plus two is seven,’ I would be wrong. In a hundred years from now, will two plus two still be four or will it be seven? It will always be four. Or I could say, ‘A circle is a square.’ Is that true or false? It is false. The truth of the matter is a circle has the property of roundness, and a square has the property of being square. A circle does not have the property of being square and a square does not have the property of being round.

So what is truth? It is that which corresponds to reality. I came across an illustration yesterday that I would like to read to you. Truth does not need updating. Many people think that, like God needs to be freshened up. We need to give him a little bit of a cosmetic makeover. He needs to be updated to 2.0. We are a people who love to freshen things up. We love updated versions. We love the newest, the latest, the best and the greatest. That is kind of the way that we roll. And so God seems outdated to many people. And they strive to freshen Him up.

“So here is the story of a man who came to his old friend, a music teacher and said to him. ‘What’s the good news today?’ The old teacher was silent as he stood up and walked across the room, picked up a hammer and struck a tuning fork. As the note sounded out through the room, he said, ‘That is A. It is A today. It was A five thousand years ago, and it will be A ten thousand years from now. The soprano upstairs sings off key, the tenor across the hall flats on his high notes and the piano downstairs is out of tune.’ The old teacher struck the note again and said, ‘But that is A my friend, and that is the good news for today.’”

Truth doesn’t change. We see our culture going through a lot of things. We were right at one time, or we were wrong at one time, and maybe we are right now, or maybe we are wrong now, or we have always been wrong, and not right. And you just start walking through this, and we need to think through some of this stuff.

We are to walk in truth. That is what John tells us here in II John. Next we are to walk in love. Look at verse 5. “And now I ask you, dear lady (or the church) – not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning – that we love one another.” You know this idea of love was so systematic, so wide spread in the church. It was a common truism that we are to love one another,
that we are commanded to love one another. “And this is love that we walk according to His commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.”

Now loving one another is easier said than done. Agreed? Anyone can love the lovable. That is true. It is loving the unlovable that shows whether or not we have God’s kind of love in our lives. When we think about this idea of love, one author had this to say. “True love is like ghosts, which everyone talks about, and few have seen.” When it comes to the idea of truth, what are we to do? The application is we read the truth and then we seek to correspond to the truth in our lives. We read the truth and we seek to align our life to the truth. In the same way with love, we look at Jesus and we see how He loves, and then we seek to love like Jesus. But love is like ghosts oftentimes.

Now I want to read to you a few quotes in just a moment by Mother Theresa. And sometimes people will get bent out of shape if a pastor doesn’t read just from evangelicals. Like they are to only quote evangelicals and they should only read evangelicals. And I don’t think that way. I don’t think that the only people who can say good statements in this world are evangelicals. Sometimes evangelicals say the stupidest things, things that I don’t even want to associate with, things that I don’t like, things that make us look silly and petty.

So a statement can be good like ‘All truth is God’s truth.’ Not every faith system contains completed truth, but there could be truth. Right? Like other faith systems talk about loving and forgiving and doing good deeds to people. So does that means we are to think, ‘Well I can’t listen to that because it wasn’t in the Bible?’ No. They are just writing down what is built in by God into human nature. So let’s not be weird like that, because it is a great way to be incredibly narrow minded, and to be very, very naïve, and for us to be insensitive. And what can happen is it is also a great way to make us judgmental. We need to be sharp, because so often Christians are intimidated to read outside of their little tight framework.

So Mother Theresa had some amazing statements about love. She said, “Let us always meet each other with a smile for the smile is the beginning of love.” And isn’t that true when you are walking by somebody and they have a big smile on their face? It makes you feel as though that person is saved. I don’t like that my resting face is so serious. We all have a resting face, and my resting face if you see me, I probably always look like I am always on a mission. I just have a serious resting face. And I kind of wish I could contort it a little bit, just get a little bit of plastic surgery like Kenny Rogers or whatever. And just kind of get a smile put on my face. But some of you walk around, and maybe you are mean as a rat, and you just have this face that looks so friendly. No, I am just giving you all a hard time. Typically I am a pretty serious guy, and I am a Type
A overly. My son says, ‘Dad, you are so Type A that your favorite restaurant is the House of Type A.’ Good one, son, you got me on that one.

Another statement by Mother Theresa is this. “Spread love everywhere you go; let no one ever come to you without leaving happier.” That is a wonderful statement to think that people could leave happier after encountering our presence. What if we woke up tomorrow and said, ‘You know what, I am going to work, I am going to school, or wherever, and everywhere I go I just want people to feel hope when they see me. I want them to feel joy and I want them to feel love. I don’t want to walk around and live my life with a miserable countenance around people and to be a downer. I want to be a lifter, an inspirer and an encourager.’

She also said this, “I have found the paradox that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love.” Well said. So how do we walk in love? We look at Jesus. And you know what I love about Jesus? Jesus loved the ragamuffins. Jesus loved the wrecks. Jesus loved the down andouters. Jesus loved the irreligious, the unrighteous and the sinners. In fact He spent time with them. And you have Christians who often run between two extremes.

First you have the isolationists, and they isolate and build their sense of identity on the fact that they only watch ‘Little House on the Prairie,’ and they only listen to ‘Carman.’ If they are going to go to a new film, it is going to star Kirk Cameron. They only stay in this particular arena where they can feel good about themselves. And they build their identity around all the things that they don’t do. They don’t watch movies that are above PG. They don’t watch the ‘Smurfs.’ They will not watch re-runs like of ‘The Greatest American Hero.’ They dress a certain way. And then they begin to look down on others who do those things that they have chosen not to do.

But then you come over here and you get the immersionists. And the immersionists say, ‘God is loving. He is cool. He is hip. It is whatever. Jack Daniels is great, I love a fifth at night. Let’s legalize marijuana. Let’s go green. I want to do a bong hit for Jesus.’ And you get these people who like to use phrases like, ‘I’m cracking up on Him.’ They just start going all in. And they watch all the movies and think it is just true to reality. They feel good because they are immersionists.

So you have the isolationists and you have the immersionists and they throw bombs at each other. The immersionists call the isolationists ‘legalists,’ and the isolationists tell the immersionists, ‘you think because you are licensed you think you can just sin all you want.’ And I just want to come in the middle and say, ‘You are wrong and you are wrong.’

We are to live in the world and not of it. And Jesus lived in the world. He got out amongst sinners. He was even accused of being a drunkard and of being a glutton.
Why? It was because He was hanging out with sinners. But guess what He wasn’t doing? He wasn’t getting drunk and He wasn’t a glutton. Jesus hung out with prostitutes, He hung out with tax collectors, and He hung out with non-Jews. He showed He was not a racist and He showed that His love was broad. He could forgive anyone for anything if they were willing.

And that is good news for us today. It means that no matter what you have ever done in your life, Jesus loves you. It means that no matter what kind of mixed messages you may have received from the isolationists who made you think you didn’t want a God who makes you stand up, and who throws moral grenades. Or the mixed messages you may have received from immersionists who act no differently than the world. Jesus is right here and He invites us to walk in truth and in love. Make sense? Good.

I had the privilege of sitting under Dr. Pentecost in Dallas Seminary. He taught for many years until he was in his 90s. He opened up his ‘Life of Christ’ class by telling us students how sorry he was that he didn’t have more written on the person of Jesus. And we were about to proceed on a study through his book, ‘The Life and Works of Jesus Christ,’ which was a 550 page book on the person of Jesus Christ. What he was saying was that Jesus was so great, and so wonderful, that he could never plumb the depths of Him adequately.

And we are to model this love before the world. How are you doing in the truth and love department this morning? Where would God invite you to acclimate yourself to who Jesus is and to align with Him? Are you an isolationist or an immersionist?

And then finally we are to walk in discernment. It was Socrates, the great Greek philosopher, who was mentor of Plato, and then Plato would mentor Aristotle. It was Socrates who said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” And many people just dither to and fro. They go through life without asking questions like ‘Why am I here? What is my purpose in life? What is going to happen when I die? Is there any meaning to life? Are morals relative? Or are they absolute?’ They don’t even think about these things. They just think about the next big game, or the next big political thing, or the next great movie, or the next great song.

But we are to examine big things. We are to think. We are to use our minds. And a lot of time people just don’t want to think. It is too much work. And we just chalk it up by saying, ‘Well I am just not the thinking kind of guy.’ The non-relational person will go, ‘Well I am just not relational.’ So that means we don’t need people in our lives, right? Or the non-servant says, ‘You know I just don’t really like to serve.’ And the non-thinking person says, ‘I am just not really into thinking.’ But we can’t do that in life. We need to be walking in truth, walking in love and walking in discernment.
Now let’s read verse 7 where we begin to walk through the letter of II John more. It says, “For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh.” John is talking about a false teacher right there and he is giving us an indicator of a false teacher. How can we know if someone is of the truth? Is if they confess the incarnation that God became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.

John continues, “Such a one is a deceiver and the antichrist. Watch yourselves (in other words be discerning) so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide the teaching of Christ, does not have God.” So in other words there are people who will walk around and they will profess truth, but they will be like the isolationists or the immersionists thinking they have it together.

But what ends up happening is the immersionist is often led astray by culture. They become a moral relativist, and they end up adopting the ways of the culture. The isolationist just ends up becoming a work space legalist, thinking they are okay in that way. And we have to be careful that we stay walking with God, that we know the truth, and this truth will then flow from us. So if we really believe in the truth we will exhibit that in our lives.

John is not saying that we have to work for our salvation, he is just saying that time will show whether or not we are the real deal. “Watch yourself so that you may not lose what we have worked for.” John is not talking about working for salvation but in bearing fruit, spreading the gospel and living for Jesus Christ.

“Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.” Now doesn’t that sound remote and weird in our tolerance based culture? It just sounds so exclusive. What is the deal? Well we have to step back and remember the purpose. If we believe that John is writing to a local church, he is telling this church not to allow the false teachers to come in and teach their false beliefs to the people.

And a shepherd is to protect his flock. John is just being wise. He is not saying to be mean spirited or to be harsh, what he is saying is there is a responsibility to protect the flock from false teaching. That is what he is saying. And anyone else would do that as well. I mean you see what happens in our culture today. You have people who are Atheists and they do not want Christianity taught in classrooms. Why? Because they don’t believe it is true. You have Muslims and they don’t want Christianity being taught at their mosques and so on. People who believe what they believe want the freedom to
teach what they believe. As you know I am passionate about us being aware of what other things people believe as well, because it helps us to be more effective.

Verse 12, “Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink, instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete.” So interestingly enough, face to face back then still is better today. What John was saying was even if he had an iPhone, he would still rather come and talk to us face to face. Texting is good, sending out an email is good, but I still think face time is better. And we see here in the Scripture that we need to go life on life, flesh on flesh, humanity upon humanity. We are created for community, to be in fellowship with one another.

And then John wraps up this short pithy letter by saying, “The children of our elect sister greet you.” He opens up by saying, “The elder to the elect lady and her children,” so what is he doing? He has first identified himself as writing to a local church and the believers, but then he closes and says, ‘Hey, guess what? My church, the church that I am a part of, this church (this lady and the children) we greet you as well.” John would know that one local church was giving a greeting to another local church.

So what is the message then of this particular letter of II John? I think today’s takeaway would be that healthy churches model truth, love and discernment. When you come to the book of II John you are reading a letter that is teaching us how to walk wisely. And it is telling us that we can test ourselves by asking, ‘Am I walking in truth? Am I walking in love? And am I being discerning?’ If so, those are three marks of a healthy church. May we be that kind of church. Let’s pray.

Father, thank you for allowing us to work thorough II John. If anyone here today has never encountered Jesus, who came to embody truth, and who died on a cross for our sins, and rose from the grave to be our Savior, to be our Lord, does not know Him I pray that in the quietness of their heart they will pray this: Jesus, forgive me for my sins. Thank you for dying on a cross for me. I surrender here and now to you, and I ask you to help me to live for you. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.