

John is writing to a group of Christians to caution them not to lose any of their rewards by inadvertently aiding a false prophet in propagating his false message about Jesus Christ. Even today we must be careful not to help those who would lead people away from a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

¹ The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; ² For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.

“The elder unto the elect [chosen; best of its kind] lady and her children” - John calls himself “the elder” (a reference to his age and his position as a spiritual leader) and is writing to “the elect lady.” “Elect” can mean chosen or it can mean “the best of its kind” (as in “choice fruit” being the best of a harvest). Commentators disagree as to who this elect lady may be. Some think the term refers to a church and the children are its members, while others believe it refers to an actual woman with her children. At least one commentator I saw believed that the word for “lady” (“kuria”) might actually be a proper name.

“whom I love in the truth” - John expresses his godly love for these people. He could have said “whom I love in the Lord.”

“and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth” - John is not the only one who cares for these people, but anyone who knows Christ and/or the truth about Christ (other Christians) also loves them. Christians should always love one another.

“For the truth's sake” - Or because of the truth. Christians who love the truth will love other Christians who also love the truth.

“which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever” - The truths of the gospel will dwell within those who have embraced them and will never leave them. This is evidence that Christians cannot lose the salvation that Christ died on the cross to purchase.

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.

“Grace be with you, mercy, and peace” - Standard greeting in John’s day at the beginning of an epistle. Paul usually started his epistles with similar words.

“from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ” - John is expressing his desire or his confidence that grace, mercy and peace would be theirs and that these gifts would come from both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

“the Son of the Father” - John makes it clear that Jesus is the Son of God, and not just another man serving God.

“in truth and love” - Everything we get from God is based on truth and His love for us.

⁴ I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

“I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth” - In the Greek, “of thy children” has the meaning of “some of thy children.” If the “elect lady” is an individual woman, John seems to be rejoicing over the fact that he’s heard that at least some of her children were “walking in truth” (become saved). Perhaps the others were not yet saved or else John had not yet heard a report on these.

“as we have received a commandment from the Father” - These children were walking in accordance with the truth that the Father had revealed in Christ.

⁵ And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

“And now I beseech [ask; request; beg] thee, lady” - John is asking the elect lady to obey an important command.

“not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee” - The command is not one that she has never heard before.

“but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another” - The command is an old one for it had been given by Jesus Christ decades earlier: to love one another. **John 15:12** *“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”*

⁶ And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

“And this is love, that we walk after his commandments” - Obedience to God’s commands is our way of expressing love, both to Him and to other Christians.

“This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it” - Love is the commandment that we have been commanded to obey, and it is a commandment that we have “heard from the beginning” of our walk with the Lord. Love is one of the core characteristics of knowing Christ and it is one that Jesus has commanded from the beginning. **John 13:34-35** *“³⁴ A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. ³⁵ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”*

⁷ For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

“For many deceivers are entered into the world” - After setting the context of love, John begins his warning of the false prophets that were teaching lies about Jesus Christ. Even in John’s day there were already many of these deceivers going around teaching lies.

“who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” - The aspect of their teaching that John is warning about (and likely the principal characteristic) is their teaching concerning the nature of Jesus Christ. They do not admit to the reality that Jesus Christ has literally come in the flesh. The title “Christ” implies His deity as the Son of God. If Christ has not come in the flesh (He exists only as a spirit being) then He could not die on the cross and pay for our sins. Such teaching leads sinners away from their only hope of salvation.

“This is a deceiver and an antichrist” - John makes it clear that such teachers deceive those who listen and that they have the spirit of an antichrist, the same spirit that will be behind the Antichrist that will come during the tribulation period.

⁸ Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

“Look to yourselves” - That is, be on guard and protect yourselves and each other.

“that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward” - God will reward those who show hospitality but John is warning of the danger of losing the rewards we have earned by showing hospitality to teachers propagating a false gospel. It is serious business because the souls of men and women are at stake when it comes to the purity of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

⁹ Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

“Whosoever transgresseth [to go past; to turn aside from], and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God” - John makes it clear that those who deny the true nature of Christ (v. 7) do not know God, no matter how godly they claim to be. They have turned aside from the truth.

“He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” - John wants us to recognize the difference between the false teachers and those who truly know God. If they believe and teach the true nature of Christ then they do know God.

¹⁰ If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: ¹¹ For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine” - If one of these false teachers come to you and they do not teach that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He came in the flesh, then he is one of these deceivers that John is warning us about.

“receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” - In John’s day it was common practice to give lodging to a traveling preacher or teacher in your house as an act of love, acceptance and benevolence. John strictly forbids doing this for these deceivers, even going so far as to forbid wishing him “God speed” (wishing God’s blessings on him). To do so implies that you agree with their teaching as well as helping them continue their “ministry.”

“For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” - To render any kind of benefit to a false teacher helps him continue to teach lies about the nature of Christ and propagate a false gospel. If we do so, God will hold us responsible for our part in preventing people from coming to Christ and thus we will lose rewards as John spoke of in v. 8.

John’s command may seem harsh and unloving, but we have to see it in the context of the love he spoke about in vs. 5-6. Helping someone who teaches a false gospel in the name of love is in effect showing hate to those who hear this false gospel and as a result reject Christ as their Savior. What looked like love was not love at all.

¹² Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

“Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink” - John apparently had neither the time nor the inclination to write out all the things he wanted to say, so he chose not to commit them to paper.

“but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face” - He anticipated being able to travel to see this lady (or church) and her children and would say the things he need to say to them face to face.

“that our joy may be full” - They would enjoy the fellowship of each other’s company in the Lord.

¹³ The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

This “elect sister” is either the sister of the woman John has written to, or else it is a sister church. The children (either literal children or church members) of this sister are the one who are sending their greetings to “the elect lady and her children.”