

Introduction

- Wrapping up our look at 1 John before Christmas!

Exposition

- This little book/letter has:
 - some **introductory remarks** - the customary opening for a letter, in vs.1-3;
 - two main **chunks of teaching**, in vs.4-6 and then in vs.7-11;
 - before concluding with **final greetings** in vs.12 & 13

Introductions (vs.1-2)

(1) The elder, To the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in the truth - and not I only, but also all who know the truth - (2) because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever:

- Arguments over whether this is to a particular lady or a church
 - I think the best case is made for it being addressed to a church ("lady") and that "her children" are the members of the church
 - "the elder" is a reference to John, probably a title rather than directly a reference to his age
 - indicative that he was well known and authoritative in this local church
 - thought there is no direct textual evidence that it was written by John, the similarity in language and topic between this and 1 John, as well as the heritage of Christian tradition, strongly suggest it was written by John the disciple of Jesus, probably in Asia Minor late in the first century
- **Two things** are worth picking out in these first two verses:
 - **First** the emphasis on **the love John has for this church**:
 - the "whom I love" is emphatic; this is a deeply personal concern for this church, not a mere administrative responsibility for a daughter church
 - and is suggestive of the kind of relationships we should have for our fellow believers!
 - whether that is with other congregations, like Mains or St Peters or whoever
 - or as individuals
 - **Second** is the indication of the tie that binds John and this church together: **truth**
 - if we are Christians, we are to love our neighbours and even our enemies
 - but we are bound to our fellow-Christians by the special bond of **truth**
 - we love one another because something holds us together - the truth, the gospel truth
 - this is worth remembering if we are ever thinking of church unity: it is the shared truth on which unity depends; so must be wary of compromises!

Greetings (v.3)

(3) Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love.

- 1. Not a prayer, but a confident declaration!
- 2. Grace & mercy are declarations of God's love, grace to the guilty and undeserving mercy to the needy sinner; peace is that restoration of harmony with God - salvation!
- 3. Declaration of fount of this salvation - "God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son"
- 4. "in truth and love": essential marks of the Christian life

Encouragements (vs.4-6)

(4) It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. (5) And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. (6) And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

- Here, especially in v.4, John is commending a faithful, inner core of the fellowship to which he is writing:
 - though it may not be true of everyone, it gives him joy that some are walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us
 - there's a warmth, a genuine gratitude, looking for that which is good and commending it;
 - are we sometimes guilty of looking on the bleak side - or more accurately forgetting to see that which is good, and encourage it?
 - walking in the truth is the dynamic of both right belief coupled to right action
- He goes on to encourage these beloved fellow-believers to press on:
 - and to love one another
 - notice how this loving one another is intimately tied up with obeying the Lord's commands
 - in other words, obedience to the Lord's commands isn't a cold, "thou shalt not" kind of thing but a warm, vivid concern for one another;
 - obedience to the command to forgive (Colossians 3:13: Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.)
 - or to support one another (Galatians 6:2: Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.)
 - and so on...
- This is the character of a healthy Christian fellowship, which John was encouraging:
 - walking in the truth...
 - following the Lord's commands...
 - and so, loving one another...

Warnings (vs.7-11)

(7) Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. (8) Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. (9) Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. (10) If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. (11) Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.

- But then comes a warning to this church that John has such a love and concern for:
 - to watch out, to not be deceived, to not run ahead of God's teaching
 - in particular to be on your guard against anyone who does not Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh
 - this is the typing together of the human and the divine natures of Jesus in one person
 - some said he was essentially divine; how could the perfect divine nature taint itself with human flesh; maybe that the divine nature came upon the human nature at his baptism... and left before he died?
 - some say that he was essentially human; not also divine - a prophet, a great man of God, an example (this is the opinion Islam has of Jesus)
 - John says: no, he was and is both human and divine - without it his work could not have been accomplished
 - and (v.9) without these marriage of human and divine we do not have a saving relationship with Christ!

- In the particular context of first century Christianity, there was a practical implication to this warning:
 - visiting preachers, touring round
 - inns were poor - houses of ill-repute, to all intents and purposes
 - so natural thing was for Christians to offer hospitality to itinerant preachers
 - the implication, the end-result of John's warning is that where a teacher came and proved false, that hospitality was to be withdrawn or not offered
 - the teaching was so dangerous it was vital that the church be kept away from it - whether the church as a whole, or also the individual in whose home the teacher was to stay...

Greetings... in person (vs.12-13)

(12) I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete. (13) The children of your chosen sister send their greetings.

- cf Gerard and Sarah:
 - easier to communicate what we mean face to face
 - and also some things that we maybe wouldn't want to say in case they were overheard or went astray...
- See again the love & concern he has: **so that our joy may be complete**

Conclusion

- Love one another!
- Encourage that which is good!
- Hold fast to the truth - even when the implications are uncomfortable or costly
- And love another again!

- **Let's go and do the same!!!**