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(d) The Spirit's Liberty sets us free from entangling bonds—we *walk in The Truth* (3rd John vs. 3); for it was the Lord Himself who said, '*The Truth shall make you free*' (see John 8:32).

(e) The Spirit's lavish Blessings are constantly being poured forth: '*we walk in the Spirit*' (Galatians 5:25); and this is the all-inclusive word concerning the Christian's daily walking before God.

DANGERS IN LIFE AND TESTIMONY

(A Study of 2 John)

W. WILCOX

1. *Withheld Love.* v. 5. The intensity of the Apostle's appeal, coupled with the statement that he writes not a new commandment but that which had been given from the beginning, seems to infer that the one to whom he writes may be in danger of withholding love from some other member or members of the Christian Community. This danger he would avert by friendly warning and earnest appeal.

First he had commended the elect lady because certain of her children were 'walking in the truth'. Here is one of the most important features of Christian life; their conduct must measure up to the new standards contained in the Christian Teaching which had been delivered to them.

(a) The Love which he bears to this dear one finds its conditioning element to be *the truth*. It is thus a love which is genuine, with no touch of unreality about it. It is a love which is sincere with no touch of hypocrisy in it. It is a love which is pure with no dilution or adulteration in it.

(b) The knowledge of the truth brings with it a similar love for those who are in the truth. That knowledge influences the whole personality including its emotions and so prompts to an inclusive love of both the truth itself and those who hold that truth.

Knowledge of the truth carries with it, from one point of view, responsibility which cannot be shirked. The knower must act in accordance with this knowledge and so regulate his activities appropriately to the truth understood.

(c) A further step is found in 'walking in the truth'. The whole tenor and temper of life are to be characterized by truth. This was important in the early stages of the Church, as the many believers had been formerly members of heathen societies in which *truth* was not found either in theory or in practice. A difference was thus to be noted between the conduct of the members of the Christian society and that of the heathen peoples around them.

It was not easy to maintain that integrity of conduct in such an environment. Therefore the Apostle found particular pleasure when he saw this Christian virtue manifest in the walk of those of whom he writes.

Secondly he proceeds to urge the importance of a *reciprocated love* amongst the saints. It was not to be only a love of the truth as theoretically stated, but as incarnated in living persons accompanied by all the warmth and ardour common to the peoples of the Orient.

But such love was also to have a conditioning element, for it was a love that had its origination in the Love of God to them and so of their love to God. This love would therefore have a Godward aspect and would express itself in a 'walk after His commandments'.

This is in accord with the words of the Lord Jesus, 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments'. Arising spontaneously from our love for our Lord is the desire to act in accordance with His expressed commands, and so our walk is regulated and directed to purposive ends. But what if this love be withheld? Then the Godward aspect of life will not be manifested and His Command will not be honoured. A loveless life is an anomaly not contemplated in Holy Scripture; for in every believer there must be something of Christ and therefore something that can be loved.

2. *Wandering Deceivers*. v. 7. Apparently there had come into being a number of teachers who journeyed about from place to place. In order to gain an audience each of these sought to advance some new theory or some further variation on old themes. So they deviated from the true stream of teaching that had emanated from the Apostles and their immediate followers. Such are here described as 'deceivers'. Their line of teaching is here denoted by three negatives. They

(a) *Denied* that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. To John, the Incarnation was a truth of prime importance, for it stood at the foundation of the faith. The Christ had really come in the flesh and dwelt among us. If this fact were denied, he who denied it was an Antichrist with whom there could be no parley.

(b) *Deviated* from the Teaching of Christ, v. 9, for they abode not in it. By their interpretation of Scripture, over-symbolization of types, and advancement of mysticism they were deceiving the converts to the Christian Faith, purely for their own advantage. By so doing the believers were in danger of losing the values of the Christian life, and the hope of the Christian's reward.

(c) *Declared* not the Teaching, v. 10, for they came preaching another Gospel and presenting a different Christ from what they had been taught. From such they were to turn away and neither to welcome them to their homes nor even give them the greeting of 'Peace'.

3. *Abused Hospitality*. v. 10. Of the many Christian Graces mentioned in the New Testament, hospitality held a prominent place. It was very important for, when Christians moved from place to place either in pursuit of their occupations or under duress because of persecution, they were not likely to find a welcome in the public inns or amongst the ordinary citizens of the towns or villages on the public highways. Hence they would only find congenial and welcome hospitality in the homes of fellow-believers. This might be withheld either because of inability to meet their own needs adequately and so there could not be hospitality extended to others, or because of a risk run by

giving shelter and aid to those under the ban of the law whether political or ecclesiastical. Hence the believer was urged again and again to extend such hospitality as they could to fellow-believers.

But such hospitality might be abused by wandering teachers who came self-styled as exponents of the word, but who were not teaching the doctrine of the Christ. For such they were neither to offer hospitality nor to give them a 'God-speed'.

To some, such action might appear harsh and unlike the commands to love, as frequently found in John's writings. But it was needful to protect the unlettered and untutored saints from exploitation and from heretical teaching, it was needful to encourage an undiluted loyalty to Christ, and it was incumbent upon all to separate from that which did not honour their Lord and did not hold to His teaching.

Charity does not demand that every kind of self-named Christian teaching or teacher should be embraced but rather that Godly discretion being used, the Lord's people should be kept from the evils of false teaching, even to the extent of not giving it house-room or friendly salutation.

Let us not withhold love from any true believer, let us not readily listen to deceivers, and let us not embrace one who comes not with the doctrine of Christ.