

Walking in Truth

2 John

WHAT WE FOUND

We read a whole book of the Bible aloud in two minutes: thirteen verses from "the elder" (traditionally the last apostle's humble self-title) to "the elect lady," most likely a church personified. Truth appears five times in four verses, and again and again the letter binds it to love (vv. 1, 3, 5-6), until verse 6 fuses them on purpose: love follows his commandments; the commandment is to follow love. Both divorces destroy: truth without love is a bludgeon; love without truth is anesthesia. St. Teresa Benedicta paid for the pairing with her life: accept nothing as truth that lacks love, nothing as love that lacks truth.

The study's last long thread came home: the word *antichrist*, planted at 1 John 2:18, developed at 4:3, makes its final appearance in all of Scripture at 2 John 7: "many deceivers... who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist." From the letter's first sentence (heard, seen, touched) to its last warning, the battle was always one battle: the flesh of Christ. And verse 9 gave the era its diagnosis: the one who "goes ahead" beyond the doctrine versus the one who abides. St. Vincent of Lérins supplied the test: true development grows in the same sense, the acorn's own oak; going-ahead plants a different tree.

The hard saying came with its furniture: "do not receive him into the house" (vv. 10-11) forbids the house church to *platform, endorse, or fund* the deceiver's mission, "he who greets him shares his wicked work", while forbidding nothing of charity to persons. David's house had the same door (Psalm 101); Eden's lack of one taught the cost. Modern translation: the shares, follows, platforms, and sponsorships that constitute our greeting. And the ending was pure John: rather faces than paper and ink, "so that our joy may be complete" (v. 12), the study's first-night verse, returning.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Irenaeus of Lyons *Against Heresies, Book III, 3-4*

Irenaeus preserves two stories from the living memory of John's circle: the apostle himself fleeing a bathhouse at Ephesus upon finding Cerinthus inside, crying that the building might fall with the enemy of the truth within; and his disciple Polycarp, met by the heretic Marcion asking to be acknowledged, answering: I acknowledge you, the firstborn of Satan. Irenaeus draws the moral John's own letter draws: the apostles and their disciples would not so much as exchange words with corrupters of the truth, precisely because they loved the flock those men were devouring.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Vincent of Lérins *Commonitory, 23*

Vincent asked the question verse 9 raises: is there then no progress in Christ's Church? There is, he answers, and great progress, but it must be true progress and not alteration: the understanding of doctrine may grow

as a child grows into a man, in the same nature, the same sense, the same judgment. The one who goes ahead beyond the doctrine has not progressed; he has changed species. Vincent's own image is sown wheat that must never turn to weeds; ours is the acorn: growth keeps the acorn's oak, betrayal plants a different tree.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) *From her writings*

The philosopher who followed truth from atheism into Carmel, and from Carmel to Auschwitz, taught the pairing this letter is made of: do not accept anything as truth that lacks love, and do not accept anything as love that lacks truth; one without the other is a destructive lie. She died refusing both divorces, and her witness is verse 6 with a face: love walking a road called truth, all the way to the end.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1.

Audit your platforms this week with verse 11 open: unfollow or stop amplifying one voice that fails Session Seven's two tests, and commend one that passes to someone who needs it.

2.

Choose presence over paper once, deliberately: replace one text-thread conversation that matters with a face-to-face meeting or call, "so that our joy may be complete."

3.

Read 2 John once more, aloud, to someone, a spouse, a roommate, a friend, and tell them the antichrist thread in three sentences. It is thirteen verses; you now own a whole book of the Bible.

MEMORY VERSE

"And this is love, that we follow his commandments; this is the commandment, as you have heard from the beginning, that you follow love." (2 John 6, RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **3 John**, the whole letter, twice: fifteen verses, three named men. Decide before you arrive which of the three you are currently most like, and bring your whole study guide; the final session harvests everything.

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