

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

2 John 1:1-13

Key Verse: 1:4

“It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.”

In St. John's time there was an absolute male-dominant society. Men did not have any idea to love women, but regarded them as those who were supposed to serve men. Even if a woman contributed a lot, her merit was not credited at all, because women had already been discredited by birth. At that time, in all countries, the world was ruled by valiant heroes and men of conquest. As a result, physically weak women were despised and regarded with no respect. Also, children were not regarded as normal human beings, because they could not earn a due amount of money. Children had to earn their respect through much fighting in the front lines of battles, and plundering many spoils. At that time, it was beyond imagination for women and children to receive proper respect. But St. John, in his epistle 2 John, recognized sincere Christian women and their children as chosen people. It is indeed amazing. Only in God do women have an honorable place. Only from sincere men of God do women receive proper respect. Thank God for John's truthful, revolutionary thought world. As we have studied, in this epistle, St. John recognizes women as chosen people. John also encourages them to keep up their life of faith by walking in the truth and by walking in obedience to love one another. In that time of the Gnostic world, he encourages them to continue in the teaching of the Bible. Finally, he sternly warns them that they should not get in touch with the antichrists.

First, the chosen lady and her children (1-3).

St. John shows himself to be the holy man of God. Also, he shows his faith that men and women are absolutely equal. For a person like St. John, it was not easy to write an epistle to a woman. But he took his pen and wrote a short letter to the chosen lady. St. John said, "To the chosen lady....," not "a chosen lady." St. John said to her, "the chosen lady." St. John used the definite article, for this lady was definitely a woman of great influence over the flock of God. John also recognized her as the elder of the church. John used the word "elder" about himself (2Jn 1:1; 3Jn 1:1). St. John honored this lady as an elder like

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

himself. It is obvious that this one lady believed that Jesus is the Son of God who came to this world to become the atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world, and through his resurrection he made it possible for us to inherit the kingdom of God. She worked hard for her children, in the hope that Jesus is coming today or tonight. She was truly a holy pilgrim and she was a good influence to the growing children who were liable to be influenced by the worldly consensus. When we read the history of the Jews, we find that mothers of the families led the Sabbath rituals. They also mainly educated their children, especially in the Torah, which was the book of all kinds of regulation. These women did not have the New Testament. They did not teach much of the Old Testament, but mostly the Torah. During the time of over 2,000 years of persecutions, Jewish mothers educated their children with the Torah and monotheism. After 2,000 years, Jews were accepted by the people of the world. Now they are happy. But we cannot forget Jewish mothers' contribution during the 2,000 years under fiery persecution of how they devoted themselves to educate their children.

Generally, before marriage women dedicate themselves to the work of God. But if they are blessed with many children then they tend to worry about the future security problem and fall in love with their children. As a result, they spoil them completely until they are totally useless. We learn that the chosen lady whom St. John mentions had her children, but she did not spoil her children with human love. She raised them with the truth of God. It seems to be a small matter. But it is very important for a mother to raise her children in the truth. Generally, worldly mothers spend much money to entertain their children with all kinds of activities and fun. Thus, they do not raise their children in the truth. Rather, they spoil their children in the worldly consensus. But this chosen lady raised her children in the truth. Thus, she was a good influence to her fellow Christians.

Many people think that children's education depends on school study curriculum, doing homework, and going to a top-class university to get a good job. But by doing so, they only become "my own man" with extreme selfishness. This kind of result occurs when mothers of the families are filled with worldly vanity of a woman. Mothers must raise children, first and last of all, to be men and women of truth. In other words, mothers must help their children to grow in their inner man in the truth. This is much better than giving them silver and gold and some

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

inheritance. A woman's duty is fundamentally to stay home and take care of the children so that they may grow in the truth and in their inner man. How important a mother's role is! When we study world history, the world changed many times, not through kings and feudal lords and the ruling systems, but because of one woman in each generation who influenced the whole world to be changed in the course of history. Among them, Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the best example. She could hardly breathe when she thought about Joseph, her fiance. She needed no other favor than that of Joseph. But the word of the Lord came upon her through the archangel. The angel's tiding to Mary in Luke 1:30-33 was as follows: "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." Again, Luke 1:35 says, "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'" Mary answered, "May it be to me as you have said" (Lk 1:38). When we read Luke's gospel, we find that Mary followed the teachings of the Bible. She circumcised her son on the eighth day after birth. She also took him to the Passover so that pre-teen Jesus could have the opportunity to learn the word of God. She participated in Jesus' suffering to the end, even standing beneath the cross, crying (Jn 19:25). Thus, Mary helped Jesus to grow in wisdom and stature (Lk 2:52). Mary also helped Jesus to practice the truth at the cost of her pain, which was like a sword piercing her soul (Lk 2:35). Mary has been worshiped in history as the true mother of Jesus. Even people in the former USSR threw away religion, they kept multi-millions of icons, the pictures of Mother Mary. Pope John Paul II is the most popular man in contemporary times. But he also worships Mary as the holy mother of Jesus. Many ignorant Catholic members do not know about Jesus. They only ask Mary's motherly love and blessing. Indeed, Mary was the mother of a new era of human history.

There were many influential women in the political world. One was the wife of Napoleon Bonaparte, Josephine. She didn't understand Napoleon Bonaparte's greatness in being a military genius. She only begged Napoleon's human love. When she was not loved, she did not respect Napoleon. Napoleon conquered the world of the time, but he

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

could not win his wife's love and died of terrible loneliness. His death in terrible loneliness was not from confinement in an island after defeat at Waterloo, but because he was not respected by his wife. We have a wrong idea about a woman's role. But we must see women as human beings, as St. John did. Another influential woman was Cleopatra. She was mindful of her royal subjects' welfare and won their support. She also made a good friendship with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. Thus, she ruled part of the world in Egypt. At that time, her influence was so great that the trend of history was diverted. There is a saying, "If Cleopatra's nose was an eighth of an inch lower, the world history would have been different."

These days, there are many women of God and women of prayer. Many people treat them with no respect in this materialistic world. Many fallen men only see women as the object of their sinful pleasure. What terrible mad dogs! Many a man divorces his wife with no fault. This is a great sin against God. A woman is a mother of the universe. We must be like Dr. Joseph Chung. His wife went to southern Illinois to take care of her oldest daughter after her daughter's baby was born. She stayed there for three weeks. Dr. Joseph Chung missed her too much and he almost became a depression patient. He was not simply missing his wife. He missed her influence, which made him rest and enjoy peace when he came home. This happened because Dr. Joseph Chung saw her in the truth, not because of his beautiful romanticism. Here we learn that we must see women in the truth of God like St. John. We also learn that a woman's role is precisely educating her children in the truth. Most women have jobs to make a little more money, abandoning their children at the babysitter. They have no strength to educate their children in the truth. This is a great mistake in the last part of the 20th century. We must pray that women in the last part of the 20th century may be dedicated like the chosen lady St. John introduced to us. St. John was so grateful for the chosen lady and her influence. St. John blesses her with a great blessing, saying, "Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love" (3). Let's pray that all the women in this generation may be praised as the chosen lady.

Second, walking in the truth (4).

Look at verse 4. "It has given me great joy to find some of your

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us." What does "the truth" mean in this verse? **First, the secular philosophers define that the truth must have "universality."** For example, the truth must be applied to the people in the first century as well as the people in the last part of the 20th century. The truth must be applied to the grandparents, and, at the same time, it should be applied to the grandchildren, even to the kings and foot soldiers. There is no such thing in the world. Jesus is the truth, because his promises apply to the people in B.C. and A.D. They also apply to the people of America, the people of Africa, the people of Great China, and the people of La Hispaniola.

Second, the truth must have "absolute value." Many people's value system changes moment by moment these days. In the past, a mansion-house was thought to be invaluable to the worldly people. But these days, a mansion-house is thought to be too burdensome because it demands huge tax money and constant maintenance. In the past, professors at the university were regarded as noble men. These days, professors get very little salary. One professor at Northwestern taught for 20 years. But his gross pay was \$35,000 with no raise at all. He should have written many books and should have been a more creative professor. But he was an easygoing person and lived very poorly and influenced his son to be a drug abuser.

Third, the truth must be "unchangeable forever." There is nothing in the world which does not change. Once America was the possession of American Indians and Hispanic people. But America is now the possession of people of the whole world. Computer technology changes so rapidly. So we are tempted to buy new computers again and again. Now many enjoy e-mail and sophisticated graphics. The most surprising thing is that human beings change in their outer appearance very quickly. A few years ago, one young girl was known as a little kid and a talented violinist. But she is no more a child. She grew enough to get married. So she became engaged to Dr. Charles Kim. Nobody can stop the change of the world. Shakespeare's English was a kind of standard English in his time. But now his English is too antiquated to read. So we know the contents of his stories, but we cannot appreciate the beauty of his sentences. His books are not universal at all at the present time. So, as an American, no one dares to take a Ph.D. course in Shakespeare. His books cannot be absolute value at all.

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

Only Jesus is the one who is universal, for he is the Son of God. His teaching about the way of salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and especially his divine lifestyle applies to the people of the first century and to the people of this post-Christian era. His teaching applies to the father Abraham and to us all. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." This one verse applies to the man of standing, Nicodemus, as well as to all of us. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life." This verse applies to the people of all ages. The Bible says man is like grass and all his glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever (1Pe 1:24,25). Jesus never changes. Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Jesus is the only absolute value. We may have everything. Yet if we lose our lives, the things of the world are totally useless. But in Jesus we have the gospel of salvation, eternal life and our eternal reward, the kingdom of God. Therefore, Jesus is the absolute value and the truth. Look at verse 4. "It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us." It is not easy to walk in the truth. But we cannot walk in the falsity. It is obvious that we must walk in the truth and we must be a good influence to our children so that they may walk in the truth. We must have the realization that we can do nothing, but the word of God can work in any kind of wretched person's heart. Then God will bless us to bear much fruit and he will make our joy complete (Jn 15:11).

Third, walking in obedience to love one another (5-6).

Look at verses 5-6. "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. 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." When we prayerfully meditate on these verses, we learn that obedience to God is to love one another. It is the old commandment of God and at the same time, it is the new commandment of God. Jesus said in John 13:34, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." St. John also said in verses 5-6, "I ask that we love one another. And this is love: that we walk in

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

obedience to his commands." How can we love one another? Fallen men are born to hate everybody around them. St. John also had such an experience. When he did not know Jesus personally, even though he lived the common life together with Jesus, he hated Peter, born leadership material. But since Jesus came into his heart, his darkness of hatred disappeared and the love of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ smeared into his heart like the heavenly sunlight. This once notorious man of hatred, John, became an outstanding man of love in the Bible. He loved Jesus. He loved the flock of God's sheep more than his own life. He loved to obey the world mission command out of his love for Jesus. Fallen man cannot love others naturally. Therefore, we must obey God's command intentionally and love one another by the help of the Holy Spirit.

Objectively speaking, it is funny that a husband hates his wife. It is also funny that a man of great potentiality hates one of his classmates. How funny it is to hate others. We don't know how much we hate others. But we must come back to our senses and decide to obey God's command so that we may grow to love one another. This is the first step of becoming a child of God. Suppose there were no love of God in the world, how sorry we would be! Most people do not care about the love of God. But we must know that God is love (1Jn 4:8,16). When we have the love of God in our hearts and practice the love of God for our brethren, there is true happiness. There is heavenly sunshine in our souls. We can have spiritual insight to see the heavens opened and the glory of God revealed over all mankind. Also, the peace of God rests upon all mankind.

Fourth, continue to teach the Bible (7-9).

There were many deceivers, who did not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. They worked hard to deceive many people in the church. The chosen lady who ministered to the flock of God was not deceived by the Gnostics, the intellectual hedonists. Then they went out from the church and publicly lived a wild life in the world. St. John defines such people as the deceiver and the antichrist. As long as the chosen lady was there, there was no danger that God's flock of sheep would be taken away. But if the chosen lady was not there, there was a liability that the flock of God's sheep would be deceived and taken by the Gnostics (7,8).

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

Here St. John shows the clear direction how to overcome the Gnostics' deception. The best way to defeat the Gnostics was to continue to teach the Bible to God's flock. Look at verse 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." The one-to-one Bible study or group Bible study seem to be trivial matters. But the word of God has the transforming power. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

During his earthly ministry, Jesus once gave crowding people enough bread to satisfy their hunger out of five loaves of bread and two fish, brought by Reverend Father Andrew. The next time they came, Jesus taught them the true meaning of the bread, which is his flesh. People began to run away, 100 by 100, 50 by 50, 30 by 30. Finally, all of them ran away except for the twelve disciples. It was a very discouraging moment for Jesus. So he asked Peter, "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Peter answered quietly, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God" (Jn 6:67-69). This story tells us that as long as we have the words of God, even if 5,000 people run away, we can remain in Jesus. On the other hand, those who come to the church but do not have the word of God in them are the same as the Gnostics, the antichrists.

When we think about Paul, there is a strong impression that Paul engaged in mass evangelism. But Paul had never had such an expensive meeting. He only had group Bible study. When group Bible study didn't work well, he shaved his head and engaged in one-to-one Bible study at the Tyrannus Bible center for a long time (Ac 19:9). Truth does not smear into our souls so easily. So even St. Paul had to teach people through one-to-one Bible study. When Paul went to Rome as an ambassador in chains, many Jewish immigrants visited him. Then he made Bible study appointments. Paul taught the Bible in this way. Obviously, Paul's Bible teaching was on a one-to-one basis. Most of them didn't believe. But a few people believed his Bible teaching. Seemingly his Bible teaching was not successful. But it was successful, and it conquered the Roman Empire.

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

When we see Jesus' life on earth, the major part of his ministry was healing the sick and teaching the Bible. He even taught the Bible in Jerusalem, where crucifixion awaited, from early morning to late night. These days many churches do not teach the Bible. They enjoy social gatherings and discussions. The pastors say many things out of their common sense, not teaching the spirit of the Bible according to the Bible passages. This is the reason many churches lost their influence and cannot be the salt of the world. They are as corrupt as the worldly people. How beautiful it is to teach the Bible to our beloved young souls. May God help us to continue to teach the Bible through one-to-one Bible study.

Fifth, do not get in touch with antichrists (10-13).

Why should we not get in touch with antichrists? It is because if we talk with them, we share in their wickedness and ungodly chatting (11). This seems to be a small matter. But men are good and evil. And to grow to be a good person is very difficult. In St. Augustine's case, it took 40 years to be a good person in Christ. But one can be a devilish person very promptly and unbelievably, because the atmosphere of the world is like heavy raining of wickedness. If we work in the heavy rain, we get wet. Therefore, we must not get in touch with antichrists. Many proud people were confident that they could persuade antichrists. But we have seen that none of them was successful to win them over to God. Rather, they were devoured by the antichrists because they are liars and murderers. St. John once went to a public bath and saw Cerinthus, an antichrist. Then he picked up his clothes and fled from the public bath in order not to talk with the antichrist. Once the saintly Polycarp met the antichrist Marcion. Marcion asked, "Do you recognize me?" "I recognize Satan's firstborn," answered Polycarp. We must draw a clear borderline between Christians and antichrists. Otherwise, there is a great peril that one Christian would stumble by the antichrist and, finally, the whole church can stumble.

Look at verse 12. St. John wanted to see them face to face. Even the most carefully written letter can be misunderstood or misinterpreted. But meeting face to face solves everything because they can communicate through heart to heart. Here we learn that St. John really wanted to visit them even though he was too old to visit them. We must learn that

WALKING IN THE TRUTH

visitation of God's flock of sheep is so important.

May the mothers of this generation come to know Jesus and raise their children in the truth, Jesus Christ our Lord. May God help us to give an honorary place from our hearts to the women of God.