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Remain In the Truth by Lucas De Costa

2 John

Until not too long ago letters were the main form of communication. Most of the New Testament is in the form of letters usually written by one of the apostles to people they were concerned about. In 2 John, John is writing "To the lady chosen by God and to her children, whom I love in the truth". Although he could be writing to the church, I am going to assume he is writing to one lady because she seems to be in some danger even though she is part of a Christian community. The problem was that some people were spreading false teaching saying that they had been illuminated so they could teach what Jesus was really like. They had gone beyond what they thought as out-dated apostolic teaching.

This letter is summarised in verse 9, "Anyone who runs ahead without remaining in the teaching of Christ does not have God. Whoever remains in His teaching has both the Father and the Son." You may be a teenager here this morning who has come to church with your parents and joined Covies but you are not really sure if you want to remain as a Christian. You can't really see yourself as part of a Christian community, reading the Bible, praying and living the Christian life. If that is you I would really love if you could pay attention to what John is saying in this letter. It is really, really important. It's a life or death subject. Maybe you are an adult who has been part of this church for a long time and the simple teaching of the Bible is not as attractive as it once was. There is a temptation to listen to new things. You may hear of a great prophet in Africa or a great healer in South America. If that is you I would really love for you to pay attention to what John is saying because this text warns us to not go beyond the teaching of the apostles. We will look at three things in 2John.

Continue in the truth. John says that we are part of the community of Christ that loves and cares for you; it is a community that loves you so much that it will speak the truth. John is saying that this lady is loved not only by him but by all those who are part of the Christian community. Imagine this lady, worried about these preachers who have gone beyond the scriptures. If she pays attention to what John says in verse 1 she can now say, 'I am loved by John and my church. I belong, they care about me and they love me. They care that I may know the truth.' You may think 'I am not sure that I feel loved by the church.' Many of us have been disappointed and felt left out. However I can guarantee that all those who love the truth love you. Sometimes we fail to love and end up hurting each other but that does not change the fact that love is the mark of the Christian community. All those who love the truth truly love you so stay in it.

Continue loving your brothers and sisters in the church by following God's commands. (v4-6) We live in a world that loves everything that is new: the newest technology, events, new books or discoveries on Mars. It is pretty clear to us that all this novelty does not give us any real satisfaction. Eventually, we are always dissatisfied with all the 'new' stuff. This is because what we actually really need is not something new but rather something that is ancient. What we really need is to follow the ancient command. This command is to love one another. While this lady has been offered a lot of novelty by false teachers, John gives an ancient command given from the beginning: to love one another. We know the word love in our modern world has become so relative. We say we love, get married and divorced a year later. True love is, "that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love." (v6) It is this lady's duty also, to love her brothers and sisters. True Christian love is demonstrated by

being hospitable, helping those in financial need or strengthening the unity of the church, being a peace-maker, loving your wife, submitting to your husband, educating your children according to God's law, being a good employee or boss, encouraging one another. By doing these things we demonstrate our love for each other. This is not something new. It is ancient. If you think the church has to move with the times and leave all that behind, I'm afraid you are in big danger because by doing this you are forsaking God's commands and true love.

Continue believing in the teaching of Christ. (v7-11) John says that if anyone comes with a different teaching this lady should not welcome them into her home. Part of love is showing hospitality. But wouldn't it be showing love by having them over and persuading them to stay with the truth? What if someone knocked on your door and asked to stay in your house because he wanted to set up dynamite to blow up the houses around the neighbourhood. No one would be hospitable to someone like that. John's command not to receive false teachers into our homes goes along the same lines. Of course we have to be hospitable to those of other faiths but this applies to those who were deceivers (v7). If Jesus was not a real man with real flesh we have no salvation. The doctrine of the incarnation is the pearl and must be protected at all costs because the human race has been stained by sin through our father Adam and all of us have been contaminated by this deadly disease. Sin tortures and gnaws at the very soul of those who are enslaved by it. It is a terrible parasite eating its way through lives, causing pain, anguish and death. It blemishes the image of God in humanity. We all need someone to pay for our sins. It was a man who sinned against God and it is a man who must put us right with God. But who is there worthy enough to pay for the sins of humanity? There is a man with flesh and bones to help us. His name is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He took on himself the very nature of Adam. He lived a perfect life. Yet he was hated by men, crucified, died, was buried and rose again and is seated on the right hand of God. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead. His reign shall have no end. His kingdom will be everlasting: very God of very God and very man of very man.

Jesus still says, "I am the way the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through me." He still claims exclusivity. Dear friends do not exchange the glory of the living God for novelty. Keep to the ancient command to love one another so you will join the great feast that the Son has gone to prepare for those who continue in his teaching.