

## Second and Third John

### Overview

1, 2, and 3 John are called “the epistles of John.” In fact, 1 John is not structured as an epistle, but as a theological treatise.<sup>1</sup> But it is addressed throughout in the second person plural as though it were a letter to a group, and it presumes that the readers are part of a specific assembly that has recently suffered from discord.

2 and 3 John are clearly letters. 3 John is clearly addressed to an individual named Gaius. 2 John is addressed to “an elect lady,” who is probably a woman in whose home an assembly meets.

We see the relation between 1 and 2 John in 2 John 1:4-7, which gives three signs of eternal life:

2Jn 1:4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children **walking in truth**, as we have received a commandment from the Father. [sign of righteousness] 5 And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we **love one another**. [sign of love] 6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it. 7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that **Jesus Christ is come in the flesh**. [orthodox belief] This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

Both 2 and 3 John describe an environment that includes not only assemblies meeting in homes, but also missionaries making their way to plant new works. 3 John describes the duty of the assemblies to bring them on their way:

3Jn 1:5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; 6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: 7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. 8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.

So we have two groups of people interacting: the “strangers” who are traveling for the sake of the gospel, and the assemblies that they visit along the way. These epistles enable us to discern two kinds of people in each group (chart).

Consider first the traveling strangers, who visit the assemblies. 2 John warns the Lady and those who meet in her home of false teachers, who promulgate the same error as those who had left the assembly in 1 John:

2Jn 1:9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

In contrast, Demetrius, probably John’s courier, merits encouragement.

3Jn 1:12 Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

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1 The closest book to it in its systematic structure is Romans. Romans is furnished with an epistolary opening and closing (in fact, two, 15:33; 16:27). But 1 John has plenty of second person references, addressed directly to the readers, as one would expect in a letter.

Those in the assemblies to whom John writes are not immune to the spiritual diversity seen in the travelers. Some in the assemblies were eager to offer fellowship to visitors:

3Jn 1:5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; But one individual in the assembly of Gaius had an overly critical attitude, even speaking against John (just as we have seen people speaking against Paul at Corinth).

3Jn 1:9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. 10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

To summarize, leaders of a local church must be careful to avoid two errors. First, they should be on the lookout for those who would deny the teaching of God’s word, particularly concerning the person of the Lord Jesus. Second, they should guard against a haughty pride that seeks to elevate their own status by criticizing all those who are outside their fellowship.

These epistles share with John’s gospel the key word “truth” (ἀλήθεια *alētheia* G225). John dominates the use of this word (Figure 1, chart).<sup>2</sup> The horizontal axis shows the total number of instances of this word in each book. John far exceeds other books with 25 instances, and 1 John, though shorter than many of the other other books, still has more instances than they do. 2 and 3 John, because of their very short length, have few instances, but in proportion to their length, they far outrank other books.

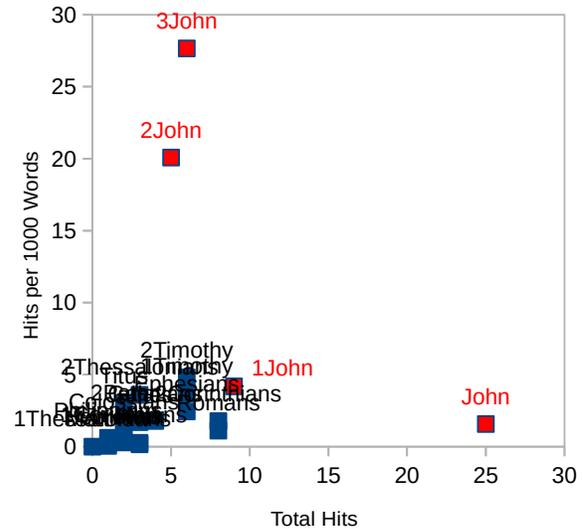


Figure 1: Use of "truth" alētheia in the NT

The word is the focus of the Lord’s discussion with Pilate:

Jhn 18:37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the **truth**. Every one that is of the **truth** heareth my voice. 38 Pilate saith unto him, What is **truth**?

We think of “truth” simply as the opposite to “lie.” But in John’s writings, it is much richer, and refers to God’s revelation. In particular, he identifies it with three things. First, it is identified with God’s word:

John 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: **thy word is truth**.

Second and third, the Lord Jesus and his Spirit are his major means of communicating with his creatures, and thus each of them is identified as “truth”:

Jhn 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, **I am** the way, **the truth**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

2 110x in NT, 6x in 3 John (27.65/1k), 5x in 2 John (20.08), 9x in 1 John (4.18), 25x in John. Interestingly, the word does not appear in the Revelation! See note for discussion.

1Jn 5:6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because **the Spirit is [the] truth**.

When we see references in these epistles to truth, we should watch for allusions to the message that God has revealed to us through his Son.

## 2 John

This epistle, like the third, follows the standard form of a Greek letter (cf. Acts 23:25-30), with a greeting, a body, and a closing salutation (chart). We are familiar with this structure from our studies in the epistles of Paul.

### 1-4, Greeting

As is customary, the writer first identifies himself and the recipient, then pronounces a blessing, and (following Paul's example) gives thanks for the recipient's condition.<sup>3</sup>

### 1-2, The Correspondents

#### 1a, The Writer

**1 The elder**—It is common for the writer of an epistle to introduce himself by name and title:

Rom 1:1 **Paul**, a **servant** of Jesus Christ, called to be an **apostle**,

Tit 1:1 **Paul**, a **servant** of God, and an **apostle** of Jesus Christ,

1Pe 1:1 **Peter**, an **apostle** of Jesus Christ,

John's greeting contrasts with these in two ways: the title he chooses, and the lack of his name.

John's choice of "the elder" rather than "an apostle" may reflect two emphases.

First, he is not asserting authority, but taking his place alongside the older men who lead the local assemblies. Compare Peter, who exhorts the elders as a fellow-elder:

1Pe 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, ...

But Peter, like Paul and unlike John, begins his letter by calling attention to his apostleship. John did this in 1 John 1:1-4 by reminding his readers of his position as an eyewitness of the Lord Jesus. But here he simply cites his age, a less authoritative stance than "an apostle."

The choice of the article, "the elder," may reflect the late date of the epistle. John is believed to be the last of the apostles to die, and the only one not to be martyred. In these latter years of his life, he would recommend himself to his readers as "the old one," the last living link to the apostolic period, anxious to guide them into a form of church practice that would survive beyond the availability of living apostles and represent the Lord effectively until he returns.

His reluctance to name himself reflects his practice throughout the gospel, where he refers to himself as "the apostle whom Jesus loved" rather than by name.

Jhn 21:20 Then Peter, turning about, seeth **the disciple whom Jesus loved** following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? ... 24

3 See pp. 17-18 of <https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/paul/PaulCourse1.pdf> for a synopsis of the structure of Paul's epistles.

This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

### **1b, The Recipient**

**unto the elect lady and her children,**—Is this a family (a woman addressed as “Lady” and her biological children), or is he addressing a local church and its members under the figure of a family?

Those who argue that the letter is addressed to a church note the plural verbs and pronouns in vv. 8, 10, 12 (chart):

2Jn 1:8 Look to **yourselves**, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10 If there come any unto **you**, and bring not this doctrine, **receive** him not into **your** house, neither **bid** him God speed: 11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. 12 Having many things to write unto **you**, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto **you**, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

Of course, the plural could represent the woman’s physical children, living with or near her. And there are good reasons to think that she is a literal woman.

First, there is no clear example elsewhere in the NT of a local church being described as the “mother” of its members. The heavenly Jerusalem is called our mother,

Gal 4:26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

But that is an image for the whole heavenly commonwealth. If it is the church, it is the universal church, not any single assembly. If this “elect lady” is a church, she is a local assembly, because she has a “sister” who is distinct from her,

2Jn 1:13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

The local church is a body and we are its members, not its children.<sup>4</sup>

The second reason to identify the elect lady as an individual is that in 1:1, John greets not just the children, but the lady herself. If she and her elect sister are churches, why in 1:13 does he send greetings from the members of the other church, but not from the church itself? If a local church is so personified that it can receive greetings, it should also be able to send them.

There is a close parallel to the situation in Paul’s epistle to Philemon (chart). There is no question that Philemon is a specific individual, a wealthy householder and owner of the slave Onesimus. But he is not alone:

Phm 1:1 Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer, 2 And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house:

Apphia and Archippus are no doubt Philemon’s wife and son. Archippus is old enough that he is responsible for some part of the ministry in Colossae, which is apparently where Philemon lives:

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4 Some cite 1 Pet 5:13 ἡ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτή “the female fellow elect one” as another example of a church described as a woman, but it is by no means clear that Peter is not here referring to own wife (see Alford).

Col 4:17 And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it.

Toward end of the epistle, Paul twice addresses a group, with plural pronouns, presumably the believers who meet with Philemon:

Phm 1:22 But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through **your** prayers I shall be given unto you. ... 25 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with **your** spirit. Amen.

So Philemon is a person who hosts a church in his house. He is old enough to have an adult son, who lives in the household and participates in the ministry of the church. We do not know what happened later in his life, but if he passed away before his wife, we can imagine that she would continue to host the church, along with her son Archippus.

The NT recognizes two other women who hosted local gatherings of God’s people. When Peter was delivered from prison in Acts 12, where did he find the church?

Act 12:12 And when he had considered the thing, he came to **the house of Mary** the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

Why is it called the house of Mary, rather than naming her husband? Probably, her husband was deceased. But she and her son Mark continued to host the believers.

Again, in Philippi, when Paul and Silas are released from prison, where do they find the believers gathered?

Act 16:40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into **the house of Lydia**: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

Lydia, apparently a single woman, she hosted the brethren. Anita and I recall with great pleasure the ministry of Mary Kilbride in Jerusalem, a single woman, in whose flat the believers met. Often, down through the centuries, faithful sisters have hosted God’s people who gather in scriptural simplicity for doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:42).

We will proceed with the understanding that the Lady<sup>5</sup> is an elderly widow. She and her adult children form the nucleus of an assembly that meets in her house (the “house” in v. 10), and the plural pronouns and verbs are addressed to her, her children, and others who meet with them.

**1c-2, Their Relation**

John not only identifies the correspondents, but describes the love between them. Compare how Paul, in writing to Titus or to the Romans, expands on his ministry as an apostle. In 2 John, this statement includes three instances of the noun “truth” ἀλήθεια (*alētheia* G225) (chart). Note the four verbs (marked in blue) that make up this sentence, their *clauses* (the non-verbs that they govern), and the *relations* among these clauses (Figure 2, chart).<sup>6</sup>

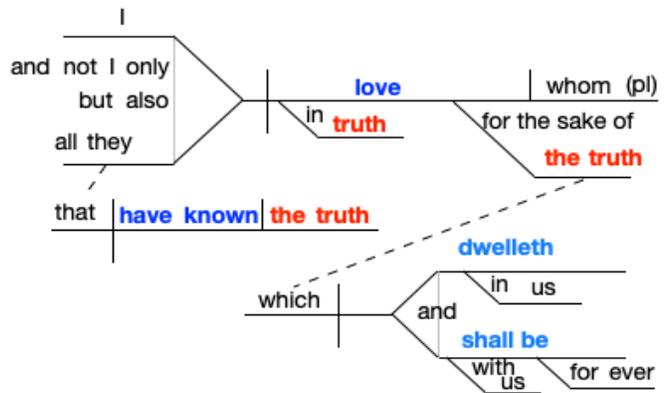


Figure 2: Syntax of 2 John 1:1b-2

5 The term is probably a title of address, “Lady,” rather than a proper name. See note.

- The main clause declares that John, with others, loves the Lady and her family.
- The first relative clause identifies the others who love her and her family as “they that have known the truth.”
- Two adverbial phrases modify the action of loving. The first is “in truth” (no article), and the second is “for the sake of the truth,” and appears to clarify the first.
- The second relative clause defines “the truth” in the second adverbial phrase as something that dwells in us and shall be with us. The parallel between the two adverbial phrases suggests that “truth” should have a related sense in the first phrase.

We suggested in the introduction that “truth” in John’s writings usually refers, not just to the opposite of “lie,” but to God’s revelation, in his Word, his Son, and his Spirit. The grammar of this sentence supports this understanding. Let’s work through it in more detail.

**Whom [plural] I love in the truth;**—The pronoun “whom” is plural. John is declaring his love, not just for the Lady, but for those with her. What does it mean to “love in truth”?

**and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;**—Not John only, but all those who are of the truth join in this love. Some might not have visited this particular home, but John knows that because of their joint devotion to the truth, they would love it as he does. “The truth” here identifies a group of people, those who “have come to know” (*ginōskō* perfect) the truth.

This clause shows that “love in the truth” does not mean simply “to love sincerely.” The phrase “all they that have known the truth” encompasses all believers. By the time John writes, the gospel has been preached throughout the known world. There are believers from Rome in the west, to Babylon where Peter ministered (1 Pet 5:13), and by tradition, to India, where Thomas found a receptive audience. All of these “have known the truth,” and most of them know nothing of the Lady and her household, somewhere near Ephesus. Yet because they are “in truth,” they love all of their brothers and sisters, and she is part of this family of love.

The next clause confirms that the term has this fuller significance.

**2 For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.**—This clause, like “in truth,” modifies the verb “love,” and explains what it means to love somebody “in truth.”

In this clause, “truth” is something eternal, something that can dwell or abide (*μένω menō* G3306) in us and be with us. The Lord Jesus defines himself as the truth:

John 14:6 I am the way, **the truth**, and the life.

As we know from the first epistle, John is preoccupied with the Lord’s exhortation in John 15,

Jhn 15:4 **Abide *menō* in me**, and I in you.

And the promise that the truth shall be with us forever echoes his final promise in Matthew,

Mat 28:20 lo, **I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.** Amen.

It certainly sounds as though “the truth” is a reference to the Lord Jesus. If so, John can find support for this usage in Paul’s teaching:

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6 The underlying method here is the same that we use with paragraphs: first identify the components of text, then study how they are related to one another. Sentence diagrams like this are a powerful tool for clarifying the structure of a text at the sentence level. For an excellent tutorial, see Lee L. Kantenwein, *Diagrammatical Analysis*. 1979: BMH Books, Winona Lake, IN

Eph 4:20 But ye have not so **learned Christ**; 21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as **the truth is in Jesus**:

Paul says that we learn, not just about Christ, but Christ himself as divine knowledge, as Truth. He explains that “truth is in Jesus,” using the name of humiliation, without title, suggesting that this truth is embodied in his earthly life, which is what the disciples experienced personally. So for John also, the Truth is not just a collection of true propositions. It is a Person, the Lord Jesus. And to love “in truth” is to share in the love that he gives among his people.

This explanation of “love in truth” is supported by John’s use of the expression in 1 John:

1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not **love** in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and **in truth**. 19 And hereby we know that we are **of the truth**, and shall assure our hearts before him.

In these verses, to love “in truth” is not just “truly love,” but “love the way those who are of the truth should love,” consistently with the revelation that God has given in his Son. So here, John’s bond to the Lady and her children is based in their shared devotion to the Truth as God has revealed it in his Son.

### 3, The Blessing

Like the description of the correspondents, this verse is extremely rich. We will consider the basic blessing, then John’s description of its source and the means by which it comes.

#### 3a, The Main Clause

**3 Grace [will] be with you us, mercy, and peace,**—Almost all NT epistles begin with a blessing, but John’s blessing differs from those in Paul’s epistles in three ways: the verb, the pronoun, and the three nouns. In the case of the first two, the KJV modifies the Greek text to bring it more in line with other greetings. We will consider the original.

#### The Verb

In the blessings in his epistles, Paul does not use a verb at all, writing simply, “Grace to you, and peace.” The KJV inserts “be” to make this a prayer, but it is in italics. Rev 1:4 also lacks a verb. By contrast, 2 John and 1-2 Peter include a verb, but they are in different *moods*.

The mood of a verb describes its relation to the reality of the event or action that it describes, as perceived by the speaker. Greek distinguishes four moods, which in English are often marked with helper verbs: indicative, imperative, subjunctive, and optative. To illustrate, let’s consider four versions of the statement, “Grace be with you” (Table 1, chart).

Mood	Meaning	Translation	NT Epistles
(verbless)	unspecified	Grace to you	Paul, Rev 1:4
Indicative	Statement of fact	Grace is/was/will be with you	<b>2 John 1:3</b>
Imperative	Command	Let there be grace with you	
Subjunctive	Uncertain	If grace should be with you ...	
Optative	Desire	I desire that grace will be with you	1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:2

Table 1: Examples of Greek verb moods

The simplest statement is a statement of fact: “Grace is with you,” meaning “you have grace.” This is called the *indicative* mood. It could be in any tense, including past, present, or future.

If God were actually giving grace to you, he might use the *imperative* mood: “I command grace to be with you,” or “Let there be grace with you” (as in LXX Gen 1:3 “Let there be light”).

The *subjunctive* mood indicates that the verb represents something that is uncertain but probable. It is often used in subordinate clauses: “If grace should be with you, then ...”

Finally, the *optative* mood indicates a wish or desire on the part of the speaker: “I desire that grace may be with you.”

The imperative and subjunctive moods do not appear in the greetings of NT epistles, but the indicative and optative do.

When Peter says “Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied,” he uses the optative mood, indicating his desire that they would experience God’s grace and peace.

By adding the verb “be” to Paul’s greetings, the KJV is understanding them as optative as well: “I desire that you would have grace and peace.”

In English, 2 John 3 also sounds like a desire or wish: “Grace, mercy, and peace be with us.” But in fact, the verb is in the future indicative, not the optative: “Grace, mercy, and peace **will be** be unto us.” This is not just a desire on his part, or a prayer to God. It is an inspired promise. This triple blessing is the Lady’s privilege, and he assures her of it.

### The Pronoun

In every other greeting in the NT, grace and peace are said to be with “you,” the recipient of the epistle, and the KJV follows that pattern here. But in 2 John, the manuscript evidence, both in number and in antiquity, overwhelmingly favors “grace ... will be with **us**.” John has already emphasized the unity of all believers, in two ways:

- In calling himself “the elder” rather than claiming the title of apostle, he takes his place alongside the leaders of the house churches rather than assuming authority over them.
- His description of the universal love shared by those who know the truth reminds them of the larger body of which they are a part.

These details continue the point he made in 1 John 1:4, that believers are united with each other because they share the life of the Father and the Son. Once we realize this unity, we can understand that the blessings of salvation are common to all of us, and John underscores this truth by the distinctive blessing he gives.

### The Content

Now consider the three terms, “grace, mercy, and peace.” Paul’s usual greeting is “Grace and peace,” which we find as well in 1, 2 Peter and Rev 1:4. The word “mercy” is added here, and in 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4.<sup>7</sup> Each of these words invites our careful attention (chart).

### Grace

“Grace” *χάρις charis* G5483 describes favor given where wrath is deserved. Paul frequently reminds us that grace is incompatible with works:

<sup>7</sup> These epistles follow his first imprisonment in Rome. Perhaps the experience of his rejection by the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem, the suffering it caused him, and how the Lord used it to expand his testimony to Rome makes him particularly aware of God’s mercy toward him.

Rom 4:4 Now to him that **worketh** is the reward not reckoned of **grace**, but of debt.

Rom 11:6 And if by **grace**, then is it no more of **works**: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of **works**, then is it no more **grace**: otherwise work is no more work.

If you deserve it, it isn't grace. But grace is more than just undeserved favor. It is favor that comes on us, not just without works, but in the presence of sin:

Rom 5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where **sin** abounded, **grace** did much more abound:

Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in **sins**, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by **grace** ye are saved;)

Grace is illustrated in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15). The younger son not only did not deserve the father's favor, but as he himself confessed (15:18, 21), he had sinned against the father. The parable does not use the word "grace," but illustrates what the term describes.

### **Mercy**

Where grace focuses on our unworthiness, mercy (ἔλεος *eleos* G1656) focuses on our misery (chart). It is epitomized in the parable of the good Samaritan.

Luk 10:30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

We know nothing about the victim's qualifications. He may have been a very righteous man. What characterizes him is his miserable condition after the attack and robbery. Three travelers come upon him. The priest and the Levite pass him by, but a Samaritan, traditionally unsympathetic to people who live either in Jerusalem or in Jericho, stops and cares for him. Note how the Lord concludes the parable:

Luk 10:36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? 37 And he said, He that shewed **mercy** on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Here, our Lord actually uses the word we are illustrating. To show mercy is to recognize someone's need and act to relieve it. "Grace removes guilt; mercy removes misery" (Bengel).

### **Peace**

"Peace" εἰρήνη *eirēnē* G1515 is the consistent LXX rendering of the Hebrew word *shalom* (H7965), which refers to wellbeing in the broadest sense. It particularly notes a condition where two parties, formerly adversaries, are now reconciled to each other. Paul contrasts it with enmity, both between Jew and Gentile, and between God and man. In Eph 2, he begins by describing these two great divisions (chart). First, they were alienated from Israel:

Eph 2:11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands

As a result, ignorant of God's promises through Israel, they were without Christ and without God:

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world :

Next, he summarizes the solution to both problems:

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Now he discusses the two divisions, in both cases contrasting peace with enmity. He begins again with the Jew-Gentile division:

14 For he is our **peace**, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; 15 Having abolished in his flesh the **enmity**, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making **peace**;

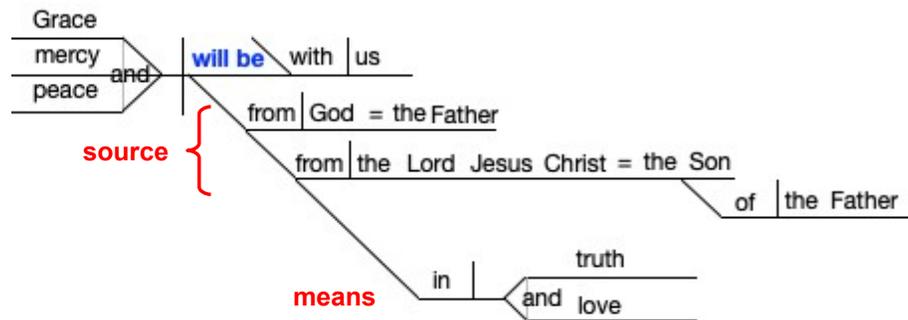
Then he returns to the division between God and man, again with enmity and peace.

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the **enmity** thereby: 17 And came and preached **peace** to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

The order of the three terms is significant. First we encounter grace: God deals first with our sin, which otherwise cuts us off from all help from him. Then he applies his mercy, repairing the damage that sin has done in our lives. Finally, we are reminded of the blessed outcome, peace—peace with God, and with one another.<sup>8</sup>

### 3b, The Source and Means of the Promise

To support this wonderful promise, John modifies it with three prepositional phrases, two starting with “from,” and the third with “in” (Figure 3, chart).



**from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father,**—The two

Figure 3: Syntax of 2 John 1:3

phrases starting with “from” indicate the *source* of the triple blessing: it comes from the Father and his Son. This is how Paul usually explains grace and peace (Rom 1:7, 1Co 1:3, 1Ti 1:2, 2Ti 1:2, Tit 1:4). It reflects the process that John has already mentioned in the first epistle:

1Jn 4:14 And we have seen and do testify that **the Father sent the Son** to be the Saviour of the world.

The same twofold operation is seen in 1 John 4:9-10; John 3:16-17; Gal 4:4. The Father entrusts his flock, consisting of those whom he has chosen, to the Son, and the Son provides the righteousness that is imputed to them, and bears the sin of which they are guilty. Seven times in

<sup>8</sup> Trench §47 helpfully observes: “In the Divine mind, and in the order of our salvation as conceived therein, the ἔλεος precedes the χάρις. God so loved the world with a pitying love (herein was the ἔλεος), that He gave his only begotten Son (herein the χάρις), that the world through Him might be saved (cf. Ephes. 2:4; Luke 1:78, 79). But in the order of the manifestation of God’s purposes of salvation the grace must go before the mercy, the χάρις must go before and make way for the ἔλεος.”

John 17, the Lord Jesus prays to his Father concerning “those whom thou hast given me,” and reports that he has done the work needed to save them. See note for further detail.

This twofold program immediately leads us to ask, “What happened to the Holy Spirit? What is his role in salvation?” The answer probably lies in the third prepositional phrase.

**in truth and love.**—If “from” indicates the *source* of the blessing, the preposition “in” indicates the *means* by which the action of the verb is accomplished. The Father has those who receive the triple blessing, and the Son has borne their sin and earned their righteousness. But that salvation still has to be applied to them individually. The Spirit does this in, by means of, truth and love.

Recall in the Upper Room Discourse that teaching is distinctively the work of the Spirit. He is called “the Spirit of truth,”

Jhn 16:13 Howbeit when he, the **Spirit of truth**, is come, **he will guide you into all truth**: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

We saw in 1 John that he is identified with truth:

1 John 5:6 the Spirit is truth.

Our sin-blinded eyes could never appreciate what our Savior has procured for us, if God’s Spirit did not open them and teach us of Christ, convincing us of sin, and righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).

This triple blessing also comes to us by means of love. Each facet of the triple blessing involves the ministry of other believers.

- We first learn of God’s grace because someone cares enough to preach the gospel to us.
- God mercifully provides for our needs through the other members of the body.
- And peace among people requires that we have love one for another.

Paul tells us the source of this love:

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is **love** ...

Having opened the eyes of God’s children to the truth, the Holy Spirit enables them to love, so that they can be channels for the triple blessing to others.

## 4, The Thanksgiving

**4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.**—Paul, after offering a greeting of grace and truth, frequently gives thanks to God for his work in the heart of his readers. For example (chart),

Rom 1:7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: **Grace to you and peace** from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. 8 **First, I thank my God** through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

1Co 1:3 **Grace be unto you, and peace**, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 **I thank my God always on your behalf**, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; ...

So John reports that he has met some of the Lady’s children, who perhaps have gone out on missionary ventures, and that they are “walking in truth,” living the life of Christ.

## 5-11, Body

This section has three paragraphs, each consisting of a request and an explanation (Table 2). The first summarizes the signs of the first epistle. The second and third are warnings to examine, first themselves, then those who come among them.<sup>9</sup>

	Request	Explanation
5-7	5 I beseech thee ... love one another	6 this is love ... this is the commandment ... 7 ... this is a deceiver
8-9	8 Look to yourselves ...	9 Whosoever transgresseth ... he that abideth ...
10-11	10 Receive him not ... neither bid ...	11 He ... is partaker of his evil deeds

## 5-7, Summary: the Three Signs

5 And now I beseech thee,<sup>10</sup> Lady [Kyria],—

Repetition of the direct address “Lady” marks a major break.

The first request is framed, not as an imperative, but as a request.

**not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.**—He echoes the Lord’s command from the upper room,

Jhn 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

When the Lord gave this commandment, it was new. Now, perhaps sixty years later, it is no longer new, but something John recalls “from the beginning,” the Lord’s earthly ministry.

The request repeats one of the three signs of eternal life. The explanation draws in the other two, marked by the three-fold repetition of the phrase, “this is,” in 6 (“this is love,” “this is the commandment”) and 7 (“this is a deceiver”) (chart).

**6 And this is love, that we walk after his commandments.**—Two changes from v. 5 show a shift from the sign of love to the sign of righteousness.

First, from the singular “commandment” in v. 5 (love one another), he now directs his readers to walk after his “commandments” (plural).

Second, love is no longer focused on loving one another, but is broader. In the third righteousness section of 1 John, the verb “love,” previously concentrated in the love sections, suddenly appears with a new object: not just one another, but God (Figure 4). This recalls the Lord’s teaching in the upper room:

Jhn 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Jhn 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: ...

So v. 6 reminds us of the need for righteousness, showing our love for God.

**This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.**

Table 2: Alternation of Requests and Explanations in the body of 2 John

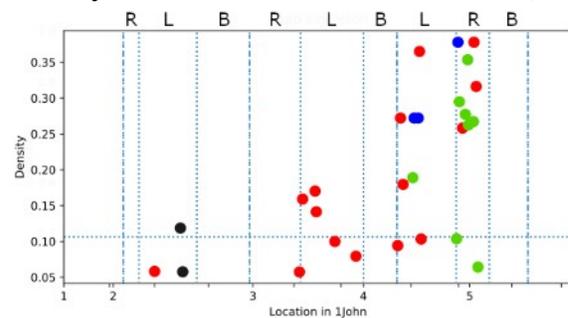


Figure 4: The verb “love” (ἀγαπάω agapaō G25) in 1 John. Red: we love others. Black: we love the world. Blue: God loves us. Green: we love God.

9 See note for a discussion of Wendland’s chiasmic analysis.  
 10 ἐρωτάω erōtaō G2016, to ask authoritatively. See Trench.

—The antecedent of “it” (feminine) is probably “the commandment.”<sup>11</sup> Now “the commandment” is generalized to whatever “ye have heard from the beginning.” The Lord here lays down an important principle: we owe obedience to what was given “from the beginning,” not to developments of doctrine over time. It is parallel to what Jude exhorted his readers:

Jud 1:3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once [for all] delivered unto the saints.

The Spirit is always free to constrain individuals, or individual assemblies, as appropriate for changing circumstances, but “the faith” that is held in common by all assemblies is that which was delivered “once for all,” “from the beginning.”

**7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.**—Having reviewed the signs of love and righteousness, he turns to the sign of correct doctrine concerning the person of the Lord Jesus. In the next section, we will see that this sign is the real burden of his letter.

This section shows two important progressions. First, the pronouns start with a request to “thee” (v. 5a), then move in 5b-6a to “we,” and finally to “ye” in referring to the need to hold to the original teaching. In addition, his presentation of the signs starts with positive exhortations, but ends by warning of error. These progressions prepare us for the next two requests.

## 8-11, Warnings

The second and third sections of the body differ from the first in three ways. Two of them reflect the progressions of the first section.

1. They are uniformly addressed to the group (“you”), not to the individual Lady (“thee”).
2. They both correct errors, rather than encouraging right behavior.
3. The requests are now framed as direct imperatives, not a request.

In urging the church to correct problems, John tells them first to examine themselves, then deal with others. This sequence respects the Lord’s instruction:

Mat 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged. 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. 3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

The Lord’s words do not forbid us to criticize others. In fact, they recognize the need for us to correct others, but insist that we must first clean our own house, and John follows this priority.

Paul agrees in his instructions for the Lord’s table. First, he exhorts his readers to examine themselves.

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11 E.R. Wendland (1990), “What is Truth? Semantic Density And The Language Of The Johannine Epistles (with special reference to 2 John).” *Neotestamentica* 24(2) 309-310 notes three possible antecedents, commandment, love, and truth, which are connected throughout the book, suggesting John may refer to all three.

1Co 11:28 But let a man **examine himself**, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

Then he reminds them of their duty to discern, or judge (διακρίνω *diakrinō* G1252, as in 11:31), the Lord’s body, that is, the other believers:

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not **discerning the Lord's body**.

	Examine Yourself	Discern the Body of Christ
Matt 7	5 first cast out the beam out of <b>thine own eye</b> ;	and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of <b>thy brother's eye</b>
1 Cor 11	28 let a man examine <b>himself</b>	29 unworthily, ... not discerning <b>the Lord's body</b>
2 John 1	8 Look to <b>yourselves</b>	10 receive <b>him</b> not

Table 3: The Proper Order of Discernment

The instructions for the Lady’s house are the same as for the assembly in Corinth, and those that the Lord gave (Table 3).

We should note one more relation between 5-7 and 8-11. It is wrong to neglect the need for correction. It is also wrong to pursue it in a peremptory, haughty manner. The overarching principle is, “Love one another” (v. 5), “speaking the truth in love” (Eph 4:15).

### 8-9, Examine Yourselves

**8 Look to yourselves**,—First, check out yourselves. The verb “look” (βλέπω *blepō* G991) is the one used by the Lord at the start of Matthew 7, “Why **beholdest** thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye ...?” (chart), and in the NT often warns against false teachers (see note).

Hebrews uses the same verb to warn of a similar danger,

Heb. 3:12 **Take heed**, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

His warning takes two forms. First, those who fall short may lose rewards. Second, they may in fact need to realize that they do not in fact have eternal life.

### 8, Loss of Reward

**that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.**—Two details in this verse invite our attention: the pronouns, and the term “reward.”

First, consider the pronouns. We expect John to warn that his readers, failing to take heed, might lose their reward, and many mss read the second person for one or another of these verbs. But in keeping with his emphasis on the unity of all believers in Christ, and the humble position he has taken, he reminds them that if they fall away, he as well as they will suffer loss.<sup>12</sup>

Next, the word “reward” (μισθός *misthos* G3408) refers to pay for work that we do. It is common, particularly among papists, to understand NT references to the reward to refer to eternal life, a share in the coming kingdom, even though there is no instance of the word that makes this identification. More than once, Paul makes clear that this equation is incorrect.

Consider first Rom 4:4-5:

12 “We” in 1 John is often exclusive, but even there 1:3; 2:19; 4:16; 5:11, 14-15 are probably inclusive (note 52 in [https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/1john/notes/1John\\_ThirdPanel.pdf](https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/1john/notes/1John_ThirdPanel.pdf)). 2 John 1:5,6 is surely inclusive.

Rom 4:4 Now to him that worketh is the **reward** not reckoned of grace, but of debt. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Rewards imply reflect debt, not grace. But as the rest of Romans 4-5 shows, we are justified before God by grace, through faith, and apart from works. God “justifieth the ungodly,” not those who try to earn salvation.

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul explicitly states that loss of reward does not mean loss of salvation. Like John, Paul recognizes that the rewards in question concern both his readers and himself.

First he focuses on the reward expected by the evangelist (“we” in the exclusive sense):

1Co 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. . . . 8 Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own **reward** according to his own labour.

Those who labor to build up God’s people will be rewarded according to their effort.

Then he tells what the Corinthians may expect as they continue in the life God has given them:

10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if **any man** build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 **Every man's work** shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a **reward**.

He teaches of an event at which “every man’s work shall be made manifest,” both the work of the apostle and the work of the disciples. Then he concludes his discussion with a statement that is vitally important for understanding the nature of rewards.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: **but he himself shall be saved**; yet so as by fire.

Works result from a salvation that rests entirely on the finished work of Christ. That salvation is eternal, and can never be undone. But both John and Paul teach that our capacity for enjoying the Lord’s presence will be in proportion to our service to him in this life.

## 9, Absence of Life

Having warned his readers of the danger of losing rewards, he goes on to a more serious risk. He has just reviewed the three signs of eternal life. If people do not show these signs, particularly over time, one must face the possibility that they are not truly born again.

In vv. 5-7, the signs culminate with the sign of belief, confessing that Jesus, the divine Christ, has come in the flesh. In v. 9, John considers the implications of denying this doctrine. This is probably the force of the phrase “the doctrine of Christ,” understood as “the doctrine about Christ.”<sup>13</sup> He states the importance of this doctrine both negatively and positively.

13 διδάσκω can take the accusative of the thing taught as well as, or in addition to, the person taught, so this can be considered an objective genitive.

Wendland argues for deliberate ambiguity to include Christ’s teaching (subjective genitive) about loving one another and loving God by obedience. But the shift from having God to having God and Christ strongly

**9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ,**—Negatively, they reject this important doctrine.

Notice the verbs that describe their relation to this doctrine. They are not merely ignorant of it, but they **transgress**,<sup>14</sup> rejecting a teaching that has been presented to them. Having once held it, they do not **abide** in it. They deliberately reject this truth, warranting John’s strong conclusion:

**hath not God.**—Negatively, if you deny that Jesus is the Christ, of course you don’t have Christ. But in addition you don’t have God, either. This verse echoes 1 John (chart),

1Jn 2:23 Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father

What does it mean to “have God”? The expression appears to go back to God’s promise to Abraham, which speaks of God’s people possessing the Lord:

Gen 17:8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and **I will be their God.**

This expression, often paired with “they shall be my people,” appears throughout the OT.<sup>15</sup> The Lord is also described as the portion or inheritance of his people:

Jer. 10:16 **The portion** חֵלֶק *cheleq* H2506 **of Jacob** is not like them: for he is the former of all things; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: The LORD of hosts is his name.

In particular, he is the possession of the Levites:

Eze 44:28 And it shall be unto them for an inheritance: **I am their inheritance:** and ye shall give them no possession in Israel: **I am their possession.**

In other words, to “have God” is to be one of his people, bound to him by covenant.

**He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.**—Positively, those who acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ not only have the Father, but the Son as well. “Having Christ” is the result of receiving him:

Jhn 1:12 But as many as **received** him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

And it is the defining condition of eternal life:

1Jn 5:12 **He that hath the Son** hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

So John urges the little assembly in the Lady’s house first to be sure that they are holding fast to this central doctrine about the Lord Jesus, which is a condition of their eternal life. Having made sure of this, they can then proceed to evaluate others.

## **10-11, Discern the Body**

**10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house,**—Note the plural. The instruction is not to the Lady per se, but to the assembly. John envisions a Christian society made up of individual churches in houses, who are visited from time to time by travelers claiming to be believers. The nature of their meetings, as described in 1 Corinthians 14,

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suggests the objective reading.

14 Following the majority reading παραβαίνω against the Alexandrian προάγω.

15 For example, Jer 24:7; 32:38; Ezk 11:20; 37:23, 27; Zech 8:8

would make it natural for visitors to share a word of instruction or exhortation. But the receiving assembly must be discerning, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus,

Mat 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

**neither bid him God speed:**—Literally, “Do not say to him, ‘Rejoice.’” Elsewhere in the NT, this expression (infinitive of the verb χαίρω *chairō* G5463) is used in the greeting of a letter, for example, in the letter of Claudius Lysias to Felix:

Act 23:26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth **greeting**.

See also Acts 15:23; James 1:1. These parallels suggest that John is discouraging even correspondence with such teachers, perhaps coupled with financial support.

**11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.**—To extend Christian fellowship to such teachers is to share in their error.

## 12-13, Closing

**12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face,**—This longing is often expressed in the NT (chart).

Act 15:36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and **visit our brethren in every city** where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

Rom 15:23 But now having no more place in these parts, and **having a great desire** these many years **to come unto you**; 24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, **I will come to you**: for **I trust to see you** in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

1Th 2:17 But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly **to see your face with great desire**.

1Ti 3:14 These things write I unto thee, **hoping to come unto thee shortly**:

2Ti 1:4 **Greatly desiring to see thee**, being mindful of thy tears, **that I may be filled with joy**;

Tit 3:12 When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, **be diligent to come unto me** to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter.

John and the other apostles used the best communication technology of their day: papyrus and ink (easier to send than stone or clay tablets); an alphabetic script (readable by common people, rather than specially trained scribes). But they still longed for personal contact. We should not let improved technology seduce us away from face to face fellowship. Each new technology increases the bandwidth of remote interaction, tempting people to remain isolated: printing, then radio and television, then the internet, and now Zoom and Teams. But face to face contact continues to offer an intimacy that technology cannot replace.

John gives the reason for desiring a personal meeting:

**that our joy may be full.**—The joy of God’s people is an important theme in both the OT and the NT (chart; see note). In the OT, it is associated with the presence, or face, of God (see note):

Psa. 16:11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence [face] is **fulness of joy**; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Psa. 21:6 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast **made him exceeding glad** with thy countenance [face].

In the NT, John the Baptist rejoices at the presence of the divine bridegroom:

John 3:29 He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this **my joy therefore is fulfilled**.

Our current verse, and 2 Tim 1:4, associate fulness of joy with the personal fellowship of believers with one another. The connection between these two may reflect the special presence of the Lord that is promised to those who gather unto him (Figure 5):



Figure 5: How "face to face" brings "fulness of joy"

Mat 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

The apostles teach that when believers gather together, they form a living temple:

Eph 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

1Pe 2:3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. 4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, 5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Throughout the Bible, the glory of God fills his sanctuary. When believers gather together, God is present in their midst, and his presence brings fulness of joy.

**13 The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.**—Now he returns to singular pronouns, addressing the elect lady and passing on greetings from her believing nephews and nieces.

## Review

Figure 6 summarizes the structure of 2 John. Unlike 1 John, it clearly follows the structure of a letter, with a well-developed greeting and a clear closing. The purpose of the letter is to remind the readers of the three signs of 1 John, and then to focus in on the sign of belief, warning them of the danger of false teachers who would subvert the truth that the man Jesus is the divine Son of God. They must be prepared to speak out against such false teaching. But in doing so, they must remember the

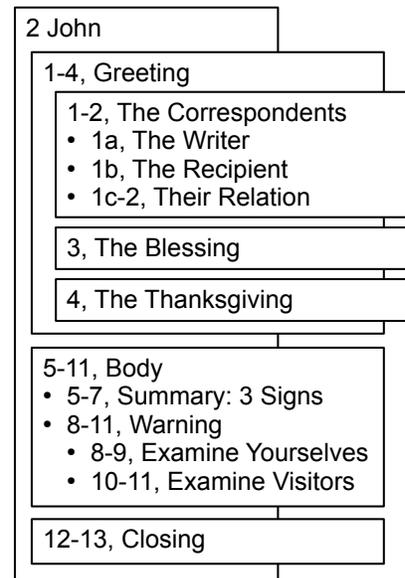


Figure 6: Structure of 2 John

## 2-3 John

Lord's pattern for correcting others, and be sure that they themselves are not drifting away from the truth.

## 3 John

### Overview

3 John, like 2 John and unlike 1 John, follows the form of a Greek letter closely (Figure 7). Like 2 John, it is written to an individual who hosts a gathering of believers. The group appears in two places:

- The plural in v. 12, “**ye** know that our record is true,” shows that John expects Gaius to share the letter with a group;
- v. 14 associates Gaius with a local group of “friends.”

After a greeting like that of 2 John, the body of the letter identifies three individuals, each associated with an assembly. Recall the Lady in 2 John (chart):

- the elder and his friends (v. 14)
- a man named Gaius and his friends (v. 14)
- a man named Diotrephes, and “the church” (vv. 9-10).

While the apostles were among the churches, their authority could resolve local difficulties. After the Lord took them home, the decentralized structure they left behind faced various challenges. 2-3 John, like many of Paul’s letters, record these challenges, and preserve apostolic teaching for handling them. In particular,

- Welcome visiting believers (3 John 1:8).
- Be discerning about doctrinal errors (2 John 1:9).
- Watch out for pride (3 John 1:9-10).
- Introduce your brothers to others (3 John 1:12).

No centralized human institution keeps these various groups in line. They form a Spirit-guided network of local assemblies known to one another by visitors among them.

### 1-4, Greeting

Like 2 John, the letter begins with a greeting that identifies the correspondents, invokes a blessing on the recipient, and expresses thanks to God.

#### 1, The Correspondents

**3Jn 1 The elder**—As in 2 John, the writer deemphasizes his apostolic authority.

**unto the wellbeloved Gaius**,—This person may appear in Paul’s history. A Gaius is converted in Corinth, during Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 18:11) (chart):

1Co 1:14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and **Gaius**;

After his first visit to Corinth, Paul briefly preaches in Ephesus, leaving Priscilla and Aquilla there, then returns to Antioch and Jerusalem, and sets out on his third journey. He spends two years in Ephesus (Acts 19), where he writes 1 Corinthians to prepare them for his second visit. Ultimately, his preaching leads to a riot, and Gaius of Macedonia is part of his party:

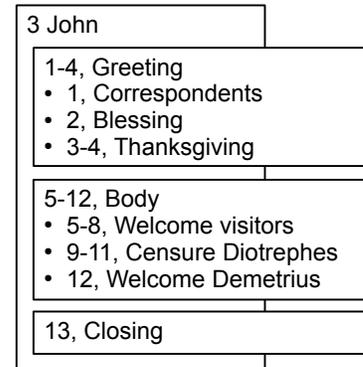


Figure 7: Structure of 3 John

Act 19:29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught **Gaius** and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

After the riot, Paul returns to Macedonia (Acts 20:1-3). He visits Corinth to pick up their gift for the saints in Jerusalem, and writes to the Romans, naming Gaius as the church's host in Corinth:

Rom 16:23 **Gaius** mine host, **and of the whole church**, saluteth you.

If this is the Gaius of Acts 19, he has returned with Paul to Greece.

When Paul once again returns to Asia (where Ephesus was), one of his companions is another Gaius, identified as from Derbe,<sup>16</sup> one of the cities of Galatia where Paul first preached:

Act 20:4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and **Gaius** of Derbe, and Timotheus; ...

This Gaius would have met the Ephesian elders at Miletus with Paul in Acts 20.

So we can identify at least two men named Gaius, both familiar with Ephesus: Gaius of Corinth (who was with Paul at the riot in Acts 19), and Gaius of Derbe (who would have met the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20). But Gaius might not live near Ephesus. John is the last living apostle, and Gaius might be at his home assembly in Corinth, hosting others as he hosted Paul (vv. 5-8), and corresponding with John about local issues.

**whom I love in the truth.**—The same expression as in 2 John 1:1c-2.

## 2, The Blessing

John's blessing to Gaius has two parts: the things of this world, and his spiritual well-being. Importantly, the first is contingent, expressed as a wish, while the second is stated as a fact. The Lord may allow our material and physical well-being to vary, but his love toward us, and care of our souls, is unchangeable and certain.

**2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health,**—He wishes him business success and good health. "Prosper" here refers to material well-being, as in 1 Corinthians 15 (chart),

1Cor. 16:2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath **prospered** him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Although Gaius is influential in the assembly, he is self-supporting, following the pattern that Paul gave to the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20.

**even as thy soul prospereth.**—John shifts from a wish to a statement of fact. Recall the blessing to the Lady in 2 John, "Grace, mercy, and peace **will be** with us ... ."

## 3-4, The Thanksgiving

**3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came**—Once again, we see evidence of visits among the different assemblies. While assemblies answer individually to the Lord, they are not

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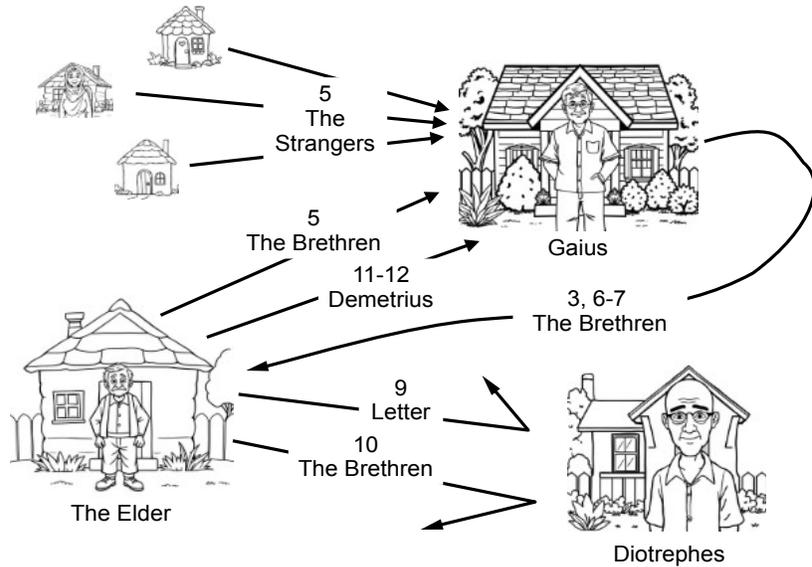
16 Gillman, *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (article "Gaius") suggests that "of Derbe" introduce Timothy, allowing the Gaius of Acts 20:4 to be the same as the others. But the syntax of place names in Acts 20:4 is against this: a simple place name following a name refers to that name (as with Sopater), while place names describing the following people are marked with δέ.

isolated from one another, but maintain contact through believing visitors. We should seek out God’s people when we travel, reminding one another of the one body that the Spirit maintains.

**and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.**—As in 2 John, John rejoices that Gaius is “walking in truth,” consistent with the example and teaching of the Lord Jesus.

## 5-12, Body

**5 Beloved,**—As in 2 John, a vocative marks the transition to a new section, in this case, to the body of the epistle. The body describes interactions between assemblies associated with John (the Elder), Gaius, and Diotrephes (Figure 8).



## 5-8, Gaius and his Visitors

**thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers;**—

Figure 8: Interactions among assemblies in 3 John

My mother taught me that when

I had enjoyed hospitality from someone, it was appropriate to write a thank-you letter. John’s letter to Gaius is, first of all, such a thank-you letter on behalf of the brothers mentioned in v. 3:

3John 3 For I rejoiced greatly, when **the brethren came** and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

The majority reading (KJV)<sup>17</sup> distinguishes two groups whom Gaius has entertained (chart). “The brethren” are from John’s group, whom Gaius would know. “The strangers” are from other assemblies. As “the brethren” met them in the home of Gaius, they would learn of the work of the Spirit in other places, and tell those who met with John of their newfound brothers.

**6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church**<sup>18</sup>:—Upon their return to John’s gathering, “the brethren” told of the material and spiritual hospitality they enjoyed with Gaius.

**whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: 7 Because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.**—These visitors were traveling on the Lord’s business, “for his name’s sake.” They may have been missionaries, sent to plant new churches (Barnabas and Saul, Acts 13:2-3) or encourage young ones (Paul and Silas, Acts 15:40-41). Or they may have been couriers, carrying letters among churches, like Epaphroditus in Php 2:25; 4:18 (and, probably, Demetrius in this letter).<sup>19</sup>

17 So MT: εις τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ εις τοὺς ξένους. Alexandrine (01, 02, 03), NA28 and other modern editions read εις τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τοῦτο ξένους, identifying the two groups with one another.

18 Anarthrous, “before assembly,” not necessarily referring to a specific local assembly (Westcott)

19 Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2) is another example. Her business (v. 2) may have been commercial, like Lydia of Thyatira visiting Philippi (Acts 17:14), so it’s not clear that she “went forth ... for his name’s sake,” though she appears

**8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.**—John commends Gaius’ hospitality. It reflects the sign of love that marks the Lord’s true people, and is essential in maintaining an informal network like this. But it is also vulnerable to infiltration by false teachers. John addressed this problem in his first epistle, warning home meetings like those of Gaius and the Lady to avoid those who did not acknowledge the deity of the Lord Jesus.

2Jn 1:10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

We now have two exhortations concerning visiting believers. 3 John 1:8 tells us to receive them. 2 John 1:10 warns us to be discerning. The next section identifies a third principle (chart).

### **9-9-10, Diotrephes and the Danger of Pride**

**9 I wrote unto the church:**—The reference here appears to be to a third church.

**but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.**

—“Among them” rather than “among you” or “among us” shows that this group is distinct from those who meet with John and Gaius.

Diotrephes abuses the warning of 2 John 1:10-11. It is not wrong for him, as an elder, to discern others who profess the faith. But his implementation of this principle has two flaws.

First, it does not recognize the authority of the apostles. John, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognizes that the eyewitnesses of the incarnation (the exclusive “we” in 1 John) were authorities to whom others should submit:

1Jn 4:6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

Paul shows this same awareness in 1 Corinthians:

1Co 14:37 If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

The fact that Diotrephes rejects even John and his messengers ought to raise danger signals.

The second problem is that Diotrephes’ true motive is not love for the truth, but personal pride. The most common elements of “the works of the flesh” (Gal 5:19-21) are those that exalt self and lead to strife among brethren. We must watch for such weaknesses in our own hearts.

**10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words:**—Compare Paul’s warnings to the Corinthians,

2Co 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. 2 I told you before [1 Cor 4:18-20], and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, **if I come again, I will not spare:**

A visit from an apostle, like Paul or John, would be especially weighty. But any elder needs to exhort those in error, based on the word of God that he has been taught.<sup>20</sup>

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to carry Paul’s letter to Rome, and would certainly have enjoyed hospitality among believers along the way.

<sup>20</sup> The basis of the elder’s rebuke is not his position (as in theories of apostolic succession), but his knowledge of the Scriptures.

Tit 1:9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine **both to exhort and to convince** the gainsayers.

In the NT, each church has multiple elder men who are accountable to one another.

**and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.**—Diotrephes has rejected not only John and his letters, but also “the brethren” from John’s assembly, mentioned before in vv. 3, 5.

## 11-12, The Commendation of Demetrius

**11 Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.**—Another vocative marks the third section in the body, commending Demetrius, who is perhaps the bearer of the letter (chart). Diotrephes does evil, missing the sign of righteousness.<sup>21</sup> Now John recommends Demetrius, who is probably the bearer of the letter, providing us with a fourth principle: when we know that a brother or sister will be visiting other groups whom we also know, we should introduce them.

**12 Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.**—The “ye” (plural) shows that Gaius is associated with an assembly of other believers.

## 13, Closing

**13 I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: 14 But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face.**—As in 2 John, John recognizes the value of personal interaction.

**Peace be to thee.**—As in Paul’s epistles, there is no verb.

Of the three key components of blessing, grace, mercy, and peace, John focuses on peace. Perhaps this is because of the threat to peace posed by the overbearing leadership of Diotrephes.

**Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.**—Once more, we are reminded of the assemblies of believers associated with each of these men.

## Summary of 2-3 John

These two epistles encourage us to interact with other assemblies, and give us four principles for fellowship with them, which are particularly helpful now that the apostles are no longer with us.

- 3 John 1:8 Welcome visiting believers
- 2 John 1:9 Discern doctrinal errors
- 3 John 1:9-10 Watch out for pride
- 3 John 1:12 Introduce your brothers

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21 The contrast between “he that doeth good” and “he that doeth evil” (sign of righteousness) reminds us of a similar contrast in 2Jn 1:9 (sign of belief), “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”. Is there a similarly concise contrast for the sign of love?

## Notes

### Kyria as term of address

Use as a personal name is rare, but as a title it is common. See discussions on-line:

<https://margmowczko.com/kuria-lady-in-papyrus-letters/>

<https://margmowczko.com/the-chosen-lady-in-2-john/>

<https://www.psephizo.com/biblical-studies/the-elder-and-the-lady-a-look-at-the-language-of-2-john/>

The first of these is based on E.A. Mathieson’s 2006 doctoral thesis: *The Perspectives of the Greek Papyri of Egypt on the Religious Beliefs, Practices and Experiences of Christian and Jewish Women from 100 CE to 400 CE*. It claims that while “Lady” (κυρία *kyria* G2959) is common in first century Greek as a title, only later does it come to be used as a personal name. BDAG *s.v.* κυρία cites Friedrich Preisigke’s *Namenbuch* (Heidelberg, 1922, <https://archive.org/details/namenbuch00prei/>), p. 188, to the effect that the term is “rare and late as a proper name.”

### Use of *alēth\** in the Revelation

Given John’s fondness for *alētheia*, it is surprising not to find the word in the Revelation. However, it is very common to find *alēthinōs* “genuine,” applied to the Lord or his attributes (Figure 9). Perhaps the implication is that now that he that is true has come in his full glory, there is less focus on the truth through which he provided for his people during their pilgrimage.

What about this?

1Pe 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

In the Revelation, the Word of God has come in fulness.

### Christ or God

Rev. 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, **he that is true**, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

Rev. 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and **true witness**, the beginning of the creation of God;

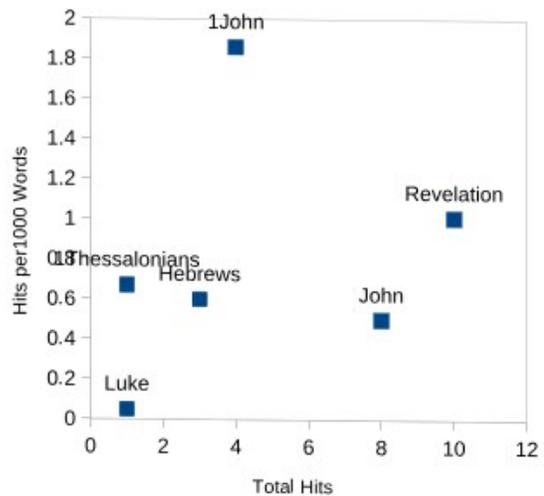


Figure 9: *alēthinōs* in the NT

Rev. 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, **holy and true**, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

Rev. 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and **True**, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

## His Actions

Rev. 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and **true are thy ways**, thou King of saints.

Rev. 16:7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, **true** and righteous are **thy judgments**.

Rev. 19:2 For **true** and righteous are **his judgments**: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

Rev. 19:9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the **true sayings** of God.

Rev. 21:5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for **these words are true** and faithful.

Rev. 22:6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

## The Father and Son as the Source of Salvation (v. 3)<sup>22</sup>

John traces the source of our blessings, “grace, mercy, and peace,” to the Father and the Son. Other passages spell out the mechanism by which the Father and the Son have given us this condition. These Scriptures teach us how this mechanism unfolds through time, starting in eternity past, then considering the Lord’s first advent, and extending to our present experience.

### Planned

The Father formed the plan that the Son carried out in our deliverance:

Gal 1:4 Who **gave himself** for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, **according to the will of God and our Father**:

The verb “give” is used in two different senses to describe the terms of this plan.

### Gave the Son to us (δίδωμι *didōmi* G1325)

The first verse that comes to mind reminds us that God has given his Son to us, so that we might receive him.

Jhn 3:16 For **God** so loved the world, that he **gave his only begotten Son**, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

God purposed to surrender his only Son for the sake of a rebellious world. (Note the consistently negative sense of “world” κόσμος *kosmos* G2889 in John.)

### Gave us to the Son (δίδωμι *didōmi* G1325)

22 Shared at the breaking of bread 23 Nov 2025

While God gave his son to us, John focus much more on the gift of us to his Son, as a flock placed under his care. This is anticipated early in John:

Jhn 6:37 **All that the Father giveth me** shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Jhn 10:27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. 29 **My Father, which gave them me**, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and my Father are one.

It comes to a focus in John 17, where the Lord mentions this gift seven times:

Jhn 17:1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to **as many as thou hast given him**.

Jhn 17:6a I have manifested thy name unto **the men which thou gavest me out of the world**:

Jhn 17:6b thine they were, and **thou gavest them me**; and they have kept thy word.

Jhn 17:9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for **them which thou hast given me**; for they are thine.

Jhn 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name **those whom thou hast given me**, that they may be one, as we are.

Jhn 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: **those that thou gavest me I have kept**, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. (18:9)

Jhn 17:24 Father, I will that **they also, whom thou hast given me**, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

After the preparation recorded in the OT, the time came to execute this plan. It is described with two forms of the verb “send,” one emphasizing his origin, the other his destination.

### **Sent forth (ἐξαποστέλλω *exapostellō* G1821)**

First, he was sent *forth*, that is, from heaven.

Gal 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, **God sent forth his Son**, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Compare Jhn 3:13 “No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.” He laid aside his heavenly glory and humbled himself, Philippians 2. He did so in submission to the Father, who sent him, and whose authority he repeatedly claims in all three gospels, particularly in John.<sup>23</sup>

### **Sent into (ἀποστέλλω *apostellō* G649)**

<sup>23</sup> Matt. 10:40; Mark 9:37; Luke 4:18; 9:48; 10:16; John 4:34; 5:24, 30, 36-37; 6:38-40, 44, 57; 7:16, 28-29, 33; 8:16, 18, 26, 29, 42; 9:4; 11:42; 12:44-45, 49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21

Second, he was sent *into* the world (again, recalling the negative sense of this word), to offer a propitiatory offering for our sin:

1Jn 4:9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that **God sent his only begotten Son into the world**, that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that **he** loved us, and **sent his Son** to be the propitiation for our sins. ... 14 And we have seen and do testify that **the Father sent the Son** to be the Saviour of the world.

The work of salvation does not end with the redemptive work of Calvary. The Lord's offering ratified the New Covenant of Jer 31 and Ezek 36, which promises us the ongoing, indwelling work of the Holy Spirit, and the distribution of this blessing is also the work of the Father and the Son:

### **Sent us the Spirit of his Son (ἐξαποστέλλω *exapstellō* G1821)**

Gal 4:6 And because ye are sons, **God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son** into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Truly, "grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father."

## **Other Echoes of Grace, Mercy, Peace**

2 Cor 13:14 The **grace** of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the **love** of God, and the **communion** of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

- Grace due to the cross
- Love, cf. Mercy *xesed*, from God's eternal plan
- Communion with other believers corresponds to Peace.

Eph 6:23 **Peace** be to the brethren, and **love** with **faith**, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- He begins with peace
- Again, Love corresponds to Mercy
- Faith is how we lay hold of grace (Eph 2:8 "by grace are ye saved through faith")

## **Sources of Full Joy**

2 John 1:12 connects this with the meeting of believers. What do other Scriptures describe as its source?

### **OT Roots**

The root promise in Psalm 16 is quoted in Acts 2 of Christ's joy at his resurrection, coming from being in the presence of God:

Psa. 16:11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is **fulness of joy**; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. תִּהְיוּנִי עֲבָדֶיךָ, *πληρώσεις με εὐφροσύνης*



Rom. 15:13 Now the God of hope **fill you with all joy** and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. πληρώσαι ὑμᾶς πάσης χαρᾶς

### Joy from Other Believers

The spiritual health of those to whom we minister:

Phil. 2:2 **Fulfil ye my joy**, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. πληρώσατέ μου τὴν χαράν

1John 1:4 And these things write we unto you, that **your joy may be full**. ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾖ πεπληρωμένη. = 2 John 1:12

Fellowship with other believers

2Tim. 1:4 Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be **filled with joy**; χαρᾶς πληρωθῶ

2Jn 1:12 Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that **our joy may be full**. ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾖ πεπληρωμένη

### Lesson

The ultimate source of full joy is the Lord’s presence. But as we minister to one another in his name, he makes his presence felt through us, and thus our fellowship with one another can contribute to fulness of joy. (Compare 1 John 1:4.) Note the importance of direct, face to face fellowship for this dynamic to occur.

	ששן	שמחה, שמחה	ששן, ששן	Total
εὐφρο-, εὐφραίνω	10	216	19	419
χαρά	4	7	2	44
Total	22	272	43	

Table 4: LXX vocabulary for joy

### LXX Parallels (Table 4)

In the NT, χαρά appears 59x, and the εὐφρ\* group only 16x. In addition, χαρά in LXX is mostly in later books (Figure 10), and does not appear at all in Gen-Kings. (But it is also lacking in some late books: 2 Chr, Ezra-Neh, Judith, Odes, Eccl-Job, Nahum-Haggai, Malachi, Letter of Jeremiah and Bel and the Dragon.)

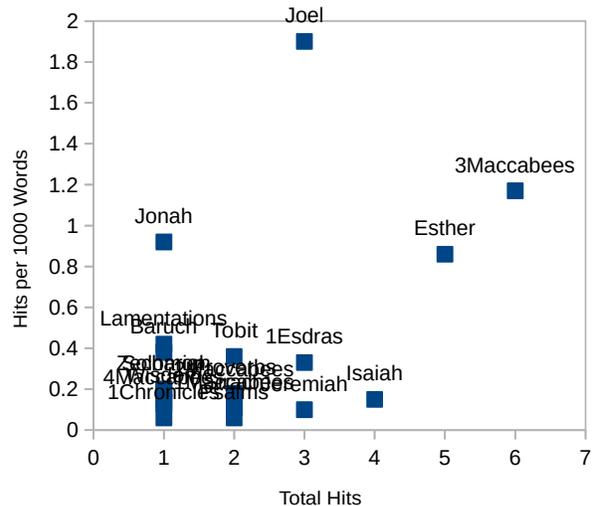


Figure 10: Frequency of χαρά in the LXX

### βλέπω Imperative and Error

As in 2 John 1:8, the imperative is frequently used to warn against error and deception.

Matt. 24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, **Take heed** that no man deceive you.

Mark 8:15 And he charged them, saying, Take heed, **beware** of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.

Mark 12:38 And he said unto them in his doctrine, **Beware** of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces,

Mark 13:5 And Jesus answering them began to say, **Take heed** lest any man deceive you:

Luke 8:18 **Take heed** therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.

Luke 21:8 And he said, **Take heed** that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

8 **Look** to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

Gal. 5:15 But if ye bite and devour one another, **take heed** that ye be not consumed one of another.

Eph. 5:15 **See** then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

Phil. 3:2 **Beware** of dogs, **beware** of evil workers, **beware** of the concision.

Col. 2:8 **Beware** lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Heb. 3:12 **Take heed**, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

Heb. 12:25 **See** that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

## Wendland's Chiastic Analysis of 2 John

E.R. Wendland (1990), "What is Truth? Semantic Density And The Language Of The Johannine Epistles (with special reference to 2 John)." *Neotestamentica* 24(2), pp. 301-333 offers a chiastic analysis of the entire epistle, outlined below. It has some attractive points, particularly the AB-BA frame. However, within the body, it has some disadvantages:

- It misses the role of v. 4 as part of the greeting in a stereotyped "thanksgiving," as often in Paul's epistles.
- It breaks up the correspondence with the three signs by separating v. 7 (the sign of correct doctrine) from love and obedience, ignoring the repeated "this is" in 6-7 that marks the three signs.
- It misses the alternation of request-explanation in the body.
- Contrasting the command to "love one another" with that not to support the false teachers is misleading: surely, we are to love them, and exercise discipline in a spirit of love, precisely to encourage their repentance, cf. 1 Cor 5 and the likely sequel in 2 Cor 2:5-11. This proposed correspondence (C-C') lacks any distinctive vocabulary.

Here is his proposed chiasm:

A (1-3) salutation—the elect lady and her children'

1 Ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἐκλεκτῆ κυρία καὶ τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῆς, οὓς ἐγὼ ἀγαπῶ ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καὶ οὐκ ἐγὼ

μόνος, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντες οἱ ἐγνωκότες τὴν ἀλήθειαν, 2 διὰ τὴν ἀλήθειαν τὴν μένουσαν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ μεθ' ἡμῶν ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα· 3 ἔσται μεθ' ἡμῶν χάρις, ἔλεος, εἰρήνη παρὰ θεοῦ πατρός, καὶ παρὰ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρός, ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ.

B (4) thanksgiving—a cause for ‘rejoicing’

4 **Ἐχάρην** λίαν ὅτι εὔρηκα ἐκ τῶν τέκνων σου περιπατοῦντας ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, καθὼς ἐντολὴν ἐλάβομεν παρὰ τοῦ πατρός.

C (5-6) prescription—walk together in love and truth

5 Καὶ νῦν ἐρωτῶ σε, κυρία, οὐχ ὡς ἐντολὴν γράφων σοι καινὴν, ἀλλὰ ἣν εἶχομεν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους. 6 Καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, ἵνα περιπατῶμεν κατὰ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ. Αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολή, καθὼς ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῇ περιπατῆτε.

D (7) characterisation—the ‘deceivers\* and ‘antichrists’

7 Ὅτι πολλοὶ πλάνοι εἰσῆλθον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, οἱ **μὴ ὁμολογοῦντες Ἰησοῦν χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί**. Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος.

E (8) admonition—do not disobey the ‘command’ (i.e. love one another/confess the truth) so you don’t lose the ‘full reward’

8 Βλέπετε ἑαυτούς, ἵνα μὴ ἀπολέσωμεν ἃ εἰργασάμεθα, ἀλλὰ μισθὸν πλήρη ἀπολάβωμεν.

D\* (9) characterisation—those ‘who do not abide in the teaching of/about Christ’

9 Πᾶς ὁ παραβαίνων καὶ **μὴ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ χριστοῦ**, θεὸν οὐκ ἔχει· ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ χριστοῦ, οὗτος καὶ τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει.

C\* (10-11) proscription—do not show love (fellowship) to those who deny the truth/‘teaching’

10 Εἴ τις ἔρχεται πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ ταύτην τὴν διδαχὴν οὐ φέρει, μὴ λαμβάνετε αὐτὸν εἰς οἰκίαν, καὶ χαίρειν αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε· 11 ὁ γὰρ λέγων αὐτῷ χαίρειν κοινωνεῖ τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ τοῖς πονηροῖς.

B\* (12) wish—to effect an occasion for ‘rejoicing’

12 Πολλὰ ἔχων ὑμῖν γράφειν, οὐκ ἐβουλήθην διὰ χάρτου καὶ μέλανος· ἀλλὰ ἐλπίζω ἐλθεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, καὶ στόμα πρὸς στόμα λαλῆσαι, ἵνα ἡ **χαρὰ** ἡμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη.

A\* (13) salutation—‘the children of your elect sister’

13 Ἀσπάζεται σε τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἀδελφῆς σου τῆς **ἐκλεκτῆς**. Ἀμήν.

## Fulness of Joy (2 John 1:12)<sup>24</sup>

Full joy comes from being in the Lord’s presence, seeing his face:

Psa 16:10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;  
neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life:

**in thy presence [face] is fulness of joy;**

at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Psa. 21:6 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: t

hou hast **made him exceeding glad with thy countenance [face]**.

24 Shared in the evening meeting, 30 Nov 2025

This joy was inaccessible to OT believers. Recall Moses' interview with God after the golden calf:

Exo 33:14 And he said, **My presence [face]** shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. 15 And he said unto him, If **thy presence [face]** go not with me, carry us not up hence. ... 18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. 19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. 20 And he said, **Thou canst not see my face:** for there shall no man see me, and live. 21 And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: 22 And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: 23 And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but **my face shall not be seen.**

God's presence abode among Israel in the tabernacle, but even that was inaccessible to Moses:

Exo 40:34 Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. 35 And **Moses was not able to enter** into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

The book of Leviticus explains the sacrifice that is needed for people to come into the presence of God, and even then, it is only the High Priest. Psalm 16 expresses a hope beyond death, and as Peter explains at Pentecost, is prophetic of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:32). Psalm 21 also describes a hope beyond death:

Psa 21:4 He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him,  
even length of days for ever and ever.

By his sinless life and sacrificial death, the Lord Jesus was able, as a man, to enter into God's presence, to see his face. And now, he gives us access to that presence:

2Co 4:6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, **to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

As our Lord said to Philip,

Jhn 14:9 he that hath seen me **hath seen the Father**

This experience is at the heart of our eternal hope:

Rev 22:3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: 4 And **they shall see his face;** and his name shall be in their foreheads.