**Lessons from a Lockdown**

**Volume II**

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**Day 83**

**2 John 1:1-2**

The elder,

To the lady chosen by God and to her children, whom I love in the truth —and not I only, but also all who know the truth — because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever:

***Questions for Personal Reflection:***

1. What does it mean to "love in the truth"?

2. Do I love "in the truth"?

3. What does "truth" mean in the two verses today? Why?

4. How do I feel about scriptures that have multiple meanings? Why?

5. What should I do when I am not sure about what scriptures mean? Why?

***Insight:***

Bible scholars are not in complete agreement whether the "lady chosen by God" was an actual woman or a church. Those who believe that the lady was an actual woman point out that the Greek word translated as "lady" is "Kyria" which was a proper name. But sometimes a church is referred to as a woman (1 Peter 5:13). If the "lady" was a real person then the children John refers to in verse 4, are her actual children. It also means that the "children of your sister" in verse 13 must also be actual children of the lady's sister. But if the "lady" is a church then her children are its members and the children of her sister, are members of church in another place, possibly where John was. But whichever John meant, the letter has lessons for us to learn.

John said that he loved them in the truth. What does it mean to love in truth?

It could mean that it is love based on Biblical truth and not on feelings or convenience. He loved them because the Word of God motivated him to love them. He loved them regardless of whether or not they loved him back. It is a love that does not fluctuate because Biblical truth is constant. It is a love that is not diminished by the circumstances. Whether there is a pandemic or not, the truth will always be the truth. This interpretation of "love in the truth" matches well with the succeeding verse about knowing the truth and the truth living in us.

It could also mean that he loved them sincerely. It was a real love. However, this interpretation of the word "truth" as a quality of the love would make the next verse on knowing truth and truth living in us difficult to apply. But it is also possible that John meant to use the word "truth" differently in the succeeding verse. The same word can have different meanings depending on the context.

In his gospel, John also refers to Jesus being the truth (John 14:6). So love in the truth could also be interpreted as to "love in Jesus." This is a love that is enabled or motivated by Jesus. This interpretation would also work well with the succeeding verse on knowing the truth and the truth living in us.

So which interpretation of "love in truth" should we believe? Does it mean love based on biblical truth, sincere love or loving in Jesus? We can believe any or all of them as they are all consistent with Biblical teaching. This is not a verse that pertains to salvation issues so we can differ on our opinions. Our understanding of a scripture that does not affect salvation or is not "core doctrine" does not have to be exact, it just has to be consistent with what the Bible teaches. We should not be dogmatic or rigid about these things.

John says that those who know the truth would love the lady and her children. Now this would be difficult to understand if the lady is an actual woman with actual children. As one scholar put it, "How can the children of an individual woman be regarded as an object of love of all believers?" For purposes of this verse, it would make more sense that the lady is a church and the children are the members. So those who know the truth would love the church. Now the church is not perfect. The church is composed of mere human beings who despite their best efforts still sin and have weaknesses. As a result, the church will have many flaws and weaknesses. We have a lot to improve on in terms of our preaching, singing, discipling, evangelism, helping the poor and the other things we do as a church. Because of this pandemic we had to learn quickly how to use technology and do things online. Preachers (and those who watched them) soon discovered that preaching online is not the same as preaching in person. The same is true for our singing, discipling and other activities. But the disciple who knows the truth will love the church despite its flaws and weaknesses, because his love is not based on perfection but on truth.

The Christian who knows the truth will not use the weaknesses of his church or its members to justify his own sinfulness. He will not be critical or look down on his church. Instead, when he sees weaknesses, he will find a way to strengthen the church. He will help more than criticize. He will not be bitter if he feels his needs are not being met by the church. He will not resent its members if it seems like his efforts are not appreciated. Instead he will focus on loving the church.

Let us love in the truth.