

HOPE BUILT ON TRUTH

Have you ever invested in a sure thing? We hear about people getting bilked out of their life saving by investing in something that sounded like a legitimate business deal. Pyramids and Ponzi schemes and other examples of fraud have been in the news and some have gone to jail and many others have experience financial ruin. There is hope involved when a person makes an investment. However, if that hope is based on something other than the truth, then failure and disappointment will be the result.

There are many people today who are basing their hope of spending eternity in heaven on being sincere and trying to do good. While being sincere and doing good is expected for those who are heaven bound, these qualities are not sufficient. We remember the words of the Apostle Paul who wrote that it is not by works of righteousness that He saves us, but it is according to God's mercy. In the first case (good works), the hope is based on something other than the truth and in the other case, hope is based on the truth of God's word.

Several of the writers of the New Testament give warnings related to false teachers and false doctrines. When you consider how much of the world lives under the influence of false religions, then you have a better appreciation of this emphasis. The danger that John saw and warned about was not the obviously false teachings of a religion such as hinduism or budhism, or other eastern religions, but was distortions of Christianity.

Some groups were teaching that salvation was available only to those with special knowledge. Others taught that Jesus had not really come in the flesh, but just appeared as if He were human. Today you will find teachers telling us that Jesus was only human and not God. Others teach that Jesus is but one of many gods. We find that we need to be aware of and on guard against false teachings just as much as those to whom John wrote in the first century.

¹The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth, ²for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: ³Grace, mercy *and* peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. ⁴I was very glad to find *some* of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment *to do* from the Father. ⁵Now I ask you, lady, not as though *I were* writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. ⁶And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it. ⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. ⁸Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. ⁹Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your* house, and do not give him a greeting; ¹¹for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. 2 John 1-11 (NASB95)

Some Bible scholars think that the "elect lady and her children" was a code name for the church and its members. I guess that fits very well considering that the church is made up of those who are the elect or chosen of God and the Church is the Bride of Christ.

The emphasis in the first four verses of this letter is on truth. As used here, the word "truth" conveys the idea of correct doctrine or body of knowledge. It also implies sincerity and honesty in our doing what we say we believe. It is possible to have the correct doctrine and not live according to those teachings. In that case, we would not be walking in truth. On the other hand, it possible to have an incorrect set of beliefs and live strictly by those tenets and still NOT be walking in truth. Insincerity and correct doctrine has the same outcome as sincerity and

incorrect doctrine - both lead to failure and disappointment.

The person or group to whom John had written this letter was congratulated for having had correct belief and sincerity. In verse 4, John mentioned the source of truth in the phrase, "as we have received commandment from the Father." This is in agreement with the words of Jesus in His prayer in John 17 where He stated "Thy Word is Truth." Sometimes we forget that God does not make suggestions but gives commandments and our love for Him is expressed by keeping His commandments. You simply cannot separate what you believe and what you live.

John was writing these things to those who were in the church. John was blunt in what he said; however, you can understand what he meant. If anyone continues to live a life of sin and does not seek to know and do God's will, then that person does not have God in his life. A person can make all the professions of faith he wants to make, however, if there is no change in his life, then it is all in vain. Some fail to teach that God expects a change to result from our being in Christ. John's advice is to stay away from those who do not teach the truth.

¹²Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to *do so* with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full. ¹³The children of your chosen sister greet you. 2 John 12-13 (NASB95)

John was letting the readers know that the brevity this note was not for lack of subject materials. Some things are better communicated in person rather than in writing.