

Subject: *The Pastor's Greatest Joy*

Scripture: 3 John 1:1-4

John is known as the apostle of love, but he could also be known as the apostle of truth. He wrote five books of the NT (Gospel of John, 1-3 John, and Revelation) and all of them reveal the importance of divine truth. We see this especially in his three short epistles of 1-3 John.

2 John 1:3-4 *Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.*

What is the pastor's greatest joy? Some might think it is seeing many people professing faith in Christ and being baptized or the church growing by leaps and bounds. Those things bring great joy, but there's an even greater joy. What could be better than that? John tells us in verse 4. Walking in the truth validates salvation. How can a pastor be sure that people are truly converted unless they are walking in truth? God's people must learn the truth, love it, and live it.

This text in 3 John speaks of the apostle and his greatest joy. A few words of background will help us understand John's statement in verse 4. The writer is the apostle John who was also a pastor who had served in that capacity for many years. He is now a senior pastor and a senior saint reflecting on his years of pastoral ministry. Here's another thing to consider. A pastor has many joys in the ministry. A pastor is not to be a gloomy or sad man as he goes about his service for the Lord. After all, the Bible says "A merry heart does good like a medicine" and "the joy of the Lord is our strength." The pastor should be a joyful person but he is also to be a serious-minded person, and we see those things come together in John's statement: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

As an apostle and pastor, John was a shepherd who had the privilege and responsibility to care for God's flock. A pastor is entrusted by God to lead, feed, and protect God's people. Notice that John says "hear" which implies that he is away from his spiritual children. But he is concerned about their spiritual well-being. A pastor's greatest joy is to know that God's people are walking in truth. What does it mean for God's people to walk in truth?

The Bible often uses the term "walk" to describe our Christian life. Our walk involves a starting point, a process, and a destination. In both the Old and New Testaments God reminds us of the privilege and responsibility of walking with Him in truth.

1. To see God's people walk in humility

Micah 6:8 *He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

Enoch walked with God. So did Noah. These men were humble men who feared God.

Ephesians 4:1-2¹ *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,*² *With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love.*

This means that we walk in a manner that reflects God's gracious work of salvation. That is a walk of humility and love toward God and others.

2. To see God's people walk in holiness

The believer's walk is initiated by God's saving grace in Christ and thus becomes a walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4).

Ephesians 5:8 *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.*

1 John 1:5-7⁵ *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* ⁶ *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:* ⁷ *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

3. To see God's people walk by faith

2 Corinthians 5:7 *For we walk by faith, not by sight.*

Hebrews 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

The entire 11th chapter of Hebrews shows us OT men who lived and walked by faith. This is the way to live.

4. To see God's people walk in wisdom

Ephesians 5:15-17¹⁵ *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,* ¹⁶ *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* ¹⁷ *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*

It is one thing to live by the world's wisdom, and it is another to live by godly wisdom.

James 3:13-17¹³ *Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.* ¹⁴ *But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.* ¹⁵ *This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.* ¹⁶ *For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.* ¹⁷ *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*

5. To see God's people walk under the control of the Holy Spirit

Galatians 5:16 *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

This is living under the control of God's presence, power, and guidance, which ultimately produces a life of good works.

Ephesians 2:10 *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

6. To see God's people walk as Christ walked

1 John 2:6 *He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.*

This is what it means to follow Christ.

John 10:27 *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*

All this sounds good, doesn't it? But how is it attainable?

7. To see God's people walk in obedience to Scripture

This is what Jesus prayed for.

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

To walk in truth a believer must understand the truth and then obey it consistently. A pastor's greatest joy is when those under his care display lives that are informed and governed by the truth of God's Word.

We have the truth and value the truth. We preach and teach the truth. We uphold and defend the truth. But all that misses the mark unless we learn it and live it.

James 1:22 *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*