

Dangerous movements/heresies swirling around in the early centuries:

1. Gnosticism — this is a philosophical way of thinking anchored in dualism — which brought a dichotomy between matter (evil) and spirit (good).
2. Docetism — Docetism applies the gnostic thinking to the incarnation (specifically). It asks: “How can a spirit being (Christ, or the Son of God) actually become FLESH (flesh is evil)? So docetists deny the real, genuine humanity of Christ.
3. Heresy of Cerinthus — His views were such that he believed Jesus the Man and Jesus the divine Christ were different. He taught that the Christ (=Spirit) came upon Jesus at his baptism and left him to suffer alone on the cross.

Against the RISE of heresies and errors (that existed or had begun to exist in incipient forms) these later epistles present a SOLID FRONT against error.

Background to 2 & 3 John

- These are the shortest little letters (Gk: “epistle”) in the NT. They’re like Pastoral Postcards from the Apostle John. So we can call him **Pastor John**.
 - 1 John - fellowship with God
 - 2 John - NO fellowship with false teachers
 - 3 John - fellowship with the brethren

*I don't know if there could be any more '**pastoral letters**' that could be so relevant to us, timely for our instruction and seasonable for us in our day as these Johannine epistles prove to be.*

Today, **TRUTH** is replaced with feelings, **REVELATION** is subservient to experience, the **OBJECTIVE** now bows to the subjective. The **CONTENT** of the gospel now is to serve feelings of the people.

2 John: Warning Against Fellowship with Teachers Rejecting the Truth!

TRUE LOVE must always be discerning. it's not naive, unthinking 'open to anyone and anyone' kind of love, it's not an inclusive, co-existing, tolerance, embracing all sort of 'love'.

SECOND JOHN

The **OUTLINE**

- 1. Abide in God’s commands (1-6)**
 - 1. Walk in truth (4)**
 - 2. Walk in love (5-6)**
- 2. Abide NOT with false teachers (7-13)**
 - 1. Doctrine/teaching (7-9)**
 - 2. Avoid/turn away (10-11)**

	Introduction	Walk in Truth and Love!	Stand against Error!	Conclusion
	Greeting Affirmation Encouragement	The lady’s children The lady herself Love one another; walk in obedience	The circumstance (many deceivers) The warning (“Watch yourselves!”) The instruction (strong but necessary)	Personal Farewell
	VERSES 1-3	VERSES 4-6	VERSES 7-11	VERSES 12-13
Emphasis	Encouragement to love and affirm		Exhortation to be discerning	
Tone	Gracious	Concerned	Strong	Warm
Personal Touch	I love you (1:1)	“I ask you” (1:5)	I warn you (1:8)	“I hope to come to you” (1:12)
Theme	Loving others within the limits that truth allows			
Key Verses	1:5-6			
Christ in 2 John	Jesus, the Son of the Father, is the only way to the Father (1:3, 9).			

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Simply: Truth is the ultimate basis for fellowship and anyone not teaching canonized truth is to be rejected.

The **THEME**: be steadfast in having pure doctrine. Avoid false teachers. (key vss 9-10)

Christology: Guard from error against the person and work of Jesus Christ.

False teaching/heresy will always center on the person, work, nature & exclusivity of Christ.

>> 2 Pet 3.17-18 -- the caution & the protection!

The main point of 2 John is that **FALSE TEACHERS WERE COMING AND INVADING!** You must “cultivate vigilance lest you be led astray!” (Merrill Tenney)

3 John: Fellowshiping With the Brethren & Advancing Truth!

THIRD JOHN

The **OUTLINE**:

- 1. Hospitality and Ministry to advance the Truth (1-8)
- 2. Warnings & teachings on guarding the Truth (9-15)

Or:

- 1. Walking in the Truth (1-4)**
- 2. Advancing the Truth (5-8)**
- 3. Enemies of the Truth (9-10)**
- 4. Testifying to the Truth (11-12)**
- 5. Fellowship in the Truth (13-15)**

	Encouragement of Gaius	Confrontation of Diotrephes	Affirmation of Demetrius	Conclusion
	Sickly (?) Obedient Hospitable Loving Supportive	Proud Rigid and negative Accusing “Church boss” complex	Good testimony Community Scriptures John	Letter is abbreviated John hopes to visit Shalom!
	VERSES 1-8	VERSES 9-11	VERSE 12	VERSES 13-14
Tone	Confirming	Denunciating	Endorsing	
Relationships	To the truth of God	With other Christians	In the world	
Emphasis	Keep it up!	Stop it!	Good for you!	
Paraphrase	I love you, and I pray for you (1:1-2)	I call attention to your deeds (1:10)	I hear good things about him (1:12)	
Theme	Holding to the truth with a loving attitude			
Key Verse	1:11			
Christ in 3 John	Jesus is the Name, for whose sake believers minister (1:7-8).			

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Overview of 2 John and 3 John — “Protect, Advance & Live Out the Truth!”

3 John was written to commend Gaius for his hospitality & part in supporting those who go out ‘*For the sake of the Name*’ & also to rebuke Diotrephes for his arrogant and dominating leadership in the local church.

Some Practical Lessons from 2 & 3 John:

1. Objective, revealed truth is foundational for the Christian. Mark it: Truth is not divisive, it is **defining**. It is the guardrails for us as we ‘walk in truth.’
2. "Love" for others is the fruit of abiding in the truth. *All in the truth must walk in love!*
3. The letters warn against separating love from the truth (can't divorce them). Truth & love are not *mutually exclusive*, they're not *polarized*. They are TWO necessary ingredients of the same cake.
4. Grow in your study of, precision of, love for & allegiance to **Christ** -- *Christology* (cf. Eph 6.24).
5. The truth is worth living for, rejoicing in, dying for & speaking forth!

'Therefore, faithful Christian, seek the truth, listen to the truth, learn the truth, love the truth, tell the truth, learn the truth, defend the truth even to death.' ... 'What I have taught with my lips I now seal with my blood.'
— John Huss (15th century)

May God give us such a love for Truth that we would LIVE for, love, abide by and protect the Truth with all our might.

Some concluding exhortations from Charles Spurgeon on fighting for & defending the Truth:

The quickest way to slay error is to proclaim the truth. The surest mode of extinguishing falsehood, is to boldly advocate Scripture doctrine upon Scripture principles. Scolding and protesting will not be so effectual in resisting the progress of error as the clear proclamation of the truth in Jesus.

And now I am to close up with just a few remarks, in the third place, TO STIR YOU UP TO THE WARFARE. Remember, O children of God, that there are many things that should make you valiant for God and for his truth. The first thing I will bring to your remembrance is the fact, that this warfare in which you are engaged is an hereditary warfare; it is not one which you began, but it is one which has been handed to you from the moment when the blood of Abel cried aloud for vengeance. Each martyr that has died has passed the blood-red flag to the next, and he in his turn has passed it on to another. Every confessor who has been nailed to the stake to burn, has lit his

Overview of 2 John and 3 John — “Protect, Advance & Live Out the Truth!”

candle, and handed it to another, and said, "Take care of that!" And now here is the old "sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Remember what hands have handled the hilt; remember what arms have wielded it; remember how often it has "pierced to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow." Will you disgrace it. Will you disgrace it? There is the great banner: it has waved in many a breeze; long ere the flag of this our land was made, this flag of Christ was born aloft, Will you stain it? Will you stain it?

Will you not hand it to your children, still unsullied, and say, "Go on, go on; we leave you the heritage of war; go on, go on, and conquer. What your fathers did, do you again; still keep up the war, till time shall end." I love my Bible because it is a Bible baptized with blood; I love it all the better, because it has the blood of Tyndale on it; I love it, because it has on it the blood of John Bradford, and Rowland Taylor, and Hooper; I love it, because it is stained with blood. I sometimes think I like the baptismal pool because that has been stained with blood, and is now upon the continent, forbidden by law. I love it, because I see in it the blood of men and of women who had been martyred, because they loved the truth. Will you not, then, stand by the banner of truth, after such an illustrious pedigree of warriors have held it in their hands?

One more from Spurgeon:

You must, dear friends, bring the **truth** before them when you want to bring them to Jesus Christ. I believe that exciting meetings do good to some. Men are so dead and careless that almost anything is to be tolerated that wakes them up; but for real solid soul-work before God' telling men the truth is the main thing. What truth? It is gospel truth, truth about Christ that they want. Tell it in a loving, earnest, affectionate manner, for God wills that they should be saved, not in any other way, but in this way—by a knowledge of the truth. He wills that all men should be saved in this way—not by keeping them in ignorance, but by bringing the truth before them. That is God's way of saving them. Have your Bible handy when you are reasoning with a soul. Just say, "Let me call your attention to this passage." It has a wonderful power over a poor staggering soul to point to the Book itself. Say, "Did you notice this promise, my dear friend? And have you seen that passage?" Have the Scriptures handy.

Another Summary of the Letters:

John's letters bring together powerfully the three aspects of authentic Christian living, whatever its cultural expression: true doctrine (mind), selfless love (heart), and obedient action (will).

1. Mind. John says clearly that certain key truths must be confessed by those who claim to be true believers. If these truths are denied, it is proof that such a person does not know and love God. John therefore speaks not only broadly of the truth and of the importance of acknowledging the truth ([1 John 2:21](#); [2 John 1-2, 9](#); [3 John 3-4](#)) but also of specific truths that must be embraced. True Christians believe, for example, that they are sinners ([1 John 1:8, 10](#)), that Jesus is the Christ ([2:22](#); [5:1](#)), and that Jesus came in the flesh ([4:1-3](#); [2 John 7](#)).

2. Heart. Authentic Christianity is not only a matter of what we believe but also of how we love. John speaks extensively in his letters of the central significance of love. True Christians love God ([1 John 4:20](#); [5:2, 10](#)) and love other believers ([2:10](#); [3:11, 14, 18](#); [4:7](#)). Indeed, the two must go together, for "whoever loves God must also love his brother" ([4:21](#)). And both kinds of human love—the vertical and the horizontal, as we may describe them—are rooted in an even greater love: God's love for us ([3:16](#); [4:7, 19](#)).

3. Will. Finally, vibrant Christian living is not only a matter of what we believe and what we love but also of what we do. Indeed, authentic love must express itself outwardly. "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" ([1 John 3:18](#)). John is insistent that to confess orthodox doctrine with the lips while neglecting to obey God's commands is proof that one has not been born of God ([2:3-4](#); [3:22-24](#); [5:2-3](#); [2 John 6](#)).