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## 2 John 1:7-8 True Love: Is Not Naïve

**2 John 1:7-8:** “For 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. Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.”

Understanding the truth of this particular passage is like understanding the truth of any passage. You have to understand the context in which it was written. John is writing to a lady in the church that is redeemed. We know that according to 2 John 1:1, she’s a “chosen” lady. It’s basically the same name that refers to church, “*ekklēsia*,” called out, chosen by God. So, he writes this woman, and his concern is that she remains devoted to the truth above all else. Why would he write that specifically to the lady? Well, I’m probably not going to make many friends today, but I’m going to tell you the truth and I’m going to speak it in love. It is interesting that Ephesians says, “speak the truth in love,” right? Now, you can search in Scripture if you want to, but it never says, “speak a lie in love,” because there is no lie that would be loving. It always begins with truth, and then you do that in love. Jesus doesn’t say, “I am love.” He says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Now, truth is loving, and that’s why He conveys Himself as such; because without the truth there is no love. We know that in so many different ways. In fact, what is interesting is that which is antithetical to the truth, what is oftentimes referred to as the devil or Satan as this real angelic being that has chosen to live a lie.

Scripture defines him this way in John 8:44, that the devil does not stand in the truth, he speaks lies because it’s of his nature. He is a liar, and he is the father of lies. What is he saying? Liars lie; that’s what they do, and they live lies. It’s hard for us to perceive that there can be people that are just so incorrigible and so wicked that they live in this realm of lies. It’s hard to believe, and it’s harder for women to believe that because women are more empathetic, sympathetic, nurturing, kind, I’ll give that to you too, and in many cases, more generous. Guys on the whole are a little bit more skeptical, maybe cynical in the way they perceive things, and they will oftentimes go, “Honey, maybe you better think this one through.”

The way that Scripture puts it in 1 Timothy 2:14, it says that it was Eve who was first deceived, not Adam. Scripture is telling us that a woman is more prone to deception than man is. In fact, 2 Timothy 3:6 talks about a warning of those false teachers that go into women's households, and it says that these are women “led by various impulses.” Another way of putting it is they’re led by various desires or longings. In other words, they may long for something to happen, and they long for that so much that it becomes their motivating force rather than “is it true? Is it righteous?” because feelings or relationships get involved. You oftentimes hear of a woman maybe being taken advantage of, and it doesn’t mean that men aren’t taken advantage of either, but women being taken advantage of a man. I mean, if the guy is tall, dark, handsome,

nice, generous, polite, rich, how can he be bad? It's just a perfect guy, ok, sometimes he's a liar, but we'll overlook that. If he has that character flaw, it's a flaw of the character. Liars lie; you can't trust them. He writes this letter to this woman, and he's concerned that she's going to allow family to delegate what she believes rather than truth. He's going to tell her not to. He's going to tell her to stay on target, that truth has to be that which generates what you do. Really, in some ways, he's telling her not to be naïve. Now, naïve wants to believe, "He's basically a good boy, I want to believe. He couldn't be bad, he's my kid." He's going to say, "I don't want you to be naïve about this."

Scripture says in Matthew 10:16, "be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves." Now, why it interjects "innocent as doves," it's basically saying that you don't have any ulterior motives. You're not trying to be hurtful towards other people, but you are going to be shrewd about the things that you believe. You're not going to be double-minded, but you're going to stay to that which is truth.

Proverbs is written to the naïve in particular, and Proverbs 1:4 says, "give prudence to the naïve," which is one of the things that Word of God does. So, when it's talking about "prudence," it's talking about discretion, knowledge, understanding, appropriate behavior in any given situation. In other words, don't act off of your emotions, act according to what is right. They tell me that an airplane in the fog oftentimes will lose bearings, and they don't know what's up and what's down. If the pilot follows his feelings, he will forget the instruments, and he'll just start flying on what he feels is up or down; oftentimes, will crash because of that. If he'll just focus on the instruments, and do what the instruments say, he'll be ok. The Word of God is that protection that comes into our lives, that guides us and directs us. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding," your own feelings, things that you think are right; believe Him, and then He will direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6) He will lead you in the right way.

So, as we come to this passage, he starts off by clearly focusing on that word "truth." We've already been through that, and he's going to explain that true love begins with truth. You can't really love if you're not true, and it's that genuine, clear, transparent heart that demonstrates that love in a very unhypocritical way.

So, as we begin to look at this, he's established the foundation of true love begins with truth. True love always rejoices in the truth. It doesn't rejoice in a lie. Now, look, there's sometimes a lie that will benefit you, and I understand people can be happy about that; because believing the lie would actually make you at that moment feel better, but true love would never do that. True love would never be happy with a lie, and just to put it in an everyday setting; look, it's fun to watch kids play sports. It's fun to go to their games, but we as parents, we as grandparents, have responsibility to rejoice in the truth. Though it's a wonderful thing that they may win a game, and hey, you want to celebrate that they win the game; what we rejoice most over is their character in the game, and the way they handle themselves in the midst of the game. You can still rejoice over the fact that they won or whatever, but the focus that you want to have is

on the character of the individual, and you want the truth to be elevated. Quite frankly, there's nothing true about rejoicing in winning a game. That will not make you a better person in life. It might give you more money, but it won't make you a better person. We rejoice in the character and the nature of a person. John makes it clear in Scripture, "I have no greater joy than to know that the children are walking in truth." He goes on in 3<sup>rd</sup> John as well. So, the emphasis is the rejoicing in that. He's established that foundation.

He now turns to the lady in verse 7, he then tells us why he's been establishing this foundation. Why is it? Many deceivers have come. If you look in the passage, when he uses the word "deceiver," he's talking about somebody purposely trying to lead somebody astray, somebody alluring somebody. Once again, if we understand the context, who would be more vulnerable to this? Well, according to 1 Timothy 2:14, it would be the woman that is more vulnerable to this. So, he's warning her about the deceivers that have gone into the world, and those who don't acknowledge Jesus Christ as having come in the flesh. This is a very important point, and one that you don't want to overlook because he's already established that in 1 John 4. Let's just start off with the first verse to establish this mandate. The mandate starts off with, "do not believe." Do you see the mandate? Are there times where you're not supposed to believe people? The world will tell you love is just believing all the time; you believe whatever they say, "just believe them." It makes you look better because you're a believer. Well, believe in God but don't believe man. Don't trust man. The way the psalmist put it, "I said in my alarm, 'all men are liars.'" It doesn't mean that men in and of themselves even try to be liars, but they can't be faithful in everything. Not only do they not have the scruples to do it, but they don't have the ability to do it because we make promises, and we can have a flat tire and not be able to arrive on time.

(1 John 4:1) "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God..."

Now, it says this in verse 3,

"Every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world."

The key verse is the one we skipped over, and that's verse 2. If you look, it reads this way,

"By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God."

That's the same thing he was saying in the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter, that many deceivers have come, and they've denied that Jesus has come in the flesh. We've talked about this before, and I don't want to be over redundant about it, but we're talking about Gnosticism. Gnosticism had infiltrated the church at a very early stage, and they believe that knowledge was the epitome of everything. So, it was all about philosophy and knowledge. As Paul will say, "knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies." We'll put it another way, knowledge talks about stuff but it never

does anything. That's the wonderful thing about Gnosticism, you could talk about grandiose things, you can philosophy in such a wonderful way, and people will go, "Wow! You heard that new philosophy?" and I'm going, "Yeah, what did they do?" They talk about all the things they do, "They're wonderful because of all the wonderful words from their lips." Well, that's Gnosticism, and if you can talk about it, then it's like you did it. Our Gospel is this; that God so loved you." You go, "Ah, he's just talking." No, look in 1 John 3, how is it that I can know love? I mean, somebody walks up and says, "I love you." How do I know that? James will say that faith without works is dead. So, you can say that you love somebody, but what's the proof?

Watch this, 1 John 3:16, "We know love by this..." How do you know love? He laid down His life for you; that's physical. Do you understand the point? In other words, true faith will always change your actions. True faith will always change your behavior. 1 Peter is about excellent behavior, and if you really did follow the Lord, your behavior is going to change. The way that you respond to your boss, husband (1 Peter 3), it will change how you respond to trials and tribulations. Your behavior is going to change. It's going to manifest itself in real form. We're not talking about philosophy here. We're talking about real change.

By this time, we are anywhere of upwards to 40 to 60 years away from Jesus' death and resurrection. If the Gnostics could say, "that was just an apparition, it was just a spirit. He didn't really come. He didn't really die. He wasn't in the flesh," then they could also say, "and you know what? Religion has nothing to do with you actually changing your life; it has everything to do with talking about how wonderful you are, or how wonderful you can be. So, we all just sit around, we sing the hymns." Well, you must be spiritual because you sang a hymn. You must be spiritual because you read a Bible, you quoted a verse, you said some wonderful things. Yeah, but faith without works is dead. That's why he goes on, and says this is 1 John 3:17,

"But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?"

That's not real love because real love is true love, and true love is genuine love; and genuine love does things; it doesn't just talk about it. It doesn't just write poetry; it actually stays when nobody else is there. The power of the Spirit of God comes within our lives, and it's the power of Christ within us that changes the way we live our lives. If you can be a Gnostic, you can separate the two.

If you look with me in 1 Timothy 4:1, it reads this way, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits..."

Now, remember what John said in 1 John 4:1, "Do not believe every spirit." We also know that John is now warning in the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the lady that there are deceitful spirits that are coming, and people bringing deceitful things. "Doctrines of demons," see the phrase? Teachings that say as long as you just come together and feel good, that's ok.

Then it says in verse 2, "by means of the hypocrisy..." Do you know what hypocrisy is? Hypocrisy is just putting on a face, "*hypokrites*" in the Greek. They would go on stage, and they would change their character by putting on another face. So, you just put on faces, but you're not real. It's saying that by means of hypocrisy of liars they've seared their conscience. They can't feel. They don't know how to care. "What happened?" You lied, then you start living a lie, and when you live the lie, you divorced yourself from caring.

It's to be noted that the next thing he writes in verse 3 is, "men who forbid marriage." Now, he's not talking about how they forbid you getting married as much; the term there, "*kōlyō*," means that they marginalize marriage, or more specifically, they withhold from. We'll put it another way, they say marriage is not an issue; that marriage is not important. They basically refuse the concept that to say vows in matrimony is inconsequential, not important. Are we hearing that today? You promised. "It's just a promise. I mean, c'mon now. You're not going to hold me to that." Yeah, we're going to hold you to it because if you don't, you're living a lie. Once you live the lie, your heart becomes seared. You're unable to feel anymore. The more you live your lie, the less ability you have to feel or care for anybody. This is why the church took such a strong stand on Ananias and Sapphira. I mean, you read in the book of Acts, and you're going, "This is the New Testament, and they just drop dead? Why did they drop dead?" Well, according to Acts 5, the way it reads is, "Satan filled your heart to lie," and the problem is you have not lied to man, but now you've lied to God. People lie to me all the time. It doesn't matter where you go, people lie all the time; but I have a real problem when they lie to the church, and they lie to God. Now, according to this text, they should have died right there. What we don't want to do is marginalize fidelity. "Fidelity is not an issue." Fidelity is all about giving your word and remaining true to it. It is the very Spirit of Jesus Christ that comes within us. "Oh, Jesus is forgiving." Yes, Jesus is forgiving, but if you trample the grace of God, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin. Scripture says there's actually a higher degree of responsibility when you convey and partake of the grace of God, then you trample underfoot the grace of God. There's actually a greater condemnation upon them. That's one of the reasons why James says let not many of you become teachers, knowing it will incur a stricter judgement. It would have been better for you not to have known the way of truth, according to Peter.

So, there are many deceivers coming into the world. His concern is that she's going to cave because of the relationship. In other words, the truth isn't going to remain intact. She'll compromise the truth so that she can perceive "everything's ok with family." He goes, "You can't do that." Now, the lie that's being propagated is it's ok to say you're a Christian, it's ok to say that you're doing things good, it's ok to even go through actions, but you don't really have to do it. See, that's the lie. So, somebody comes back, and they say, "I did something wrong." Ok, but we want to see action because you're already known as a liar. The action is Christ in the flesh We want to see Christ in the flesh. They go, "You don't believe me." You're right. I don't believe you because you're a liar. That's hard for a woman to say something like that. If you go back to the passage, he goes, "Look, the deceivers have gone into the world, and they don't

acknowledge Christ.” Then in verse 8, “Watch yourselves.” And then he goes on, and says in verse 10, by the way don’t let them in your house. Now, we know that the text is referring to maybe even family members. How do you say no to a family member? Even David couldn’t do that. But the Spirit of God abides in us, and we know that if we abide in the Spirit of truth, God will do that which is most compassionate. God begins to work. No longer are we the one that is working as the “savior,” but God is working as the Savior. And we believe if we hold tenaciously to the truth, God begins to work in that life, and can transform. I believe that God can transform in spite of themselves. However, what we can’t do is compromise the truth. It will never save anybody because truth is the anchor.

There’s an interesting passage in Proverbs 14:15, it says, “The naïve believe everything.” Scripture is telling us not to believe people. I know the world will tell you, “Well, that’s mean, that’s heartless.” It’s one of the most loving things you could ever do. If somebody proves themselves trustworthy that’s a wonderful thing. I mean, it’s required of stewards that they be found trustworthy, and we’re to only teach faithful men who will teach others also. It is that fidelity that we hold onto, and we should lift up as paragons, but don’t be surprised if men lie.

There’s a passage in Proverbs 26, it might help in some ways clarify what’s being said by “don’t believe.” Proverbs 26:18 says, “Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows and death.” I wonder what that would be like, a madman just throwing fire. “Duck!” You don’t know who it’s going to hit. You don’t know who’s going to hurt. Quite frankly, a liar doesn’t care who he hurts. He just cares about what he wants.

(Proverbs 26:19) “So is the man who deceives his neighbor,  
And says, ‘Was I not joking?’”

In the text he’s saying, “It’s no big deal.” He’s making light of deception. “You lied.” “Oh, c’mon. What’s wrong with you guys.” Did you hold a grudge? No, but you lied.

(Proverbs 26:20) “For lack of wood the fire goes out,  
And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down.”

The deceiver will kind of go behind the scenes, and back bite, murmur, and talk about people, Twitter, Facebook, gossip, whatever. So, they just throw these things, and they weave it in the air. If you just stop listening to them, “I wonder what else they have to say today.” Stop! Knock them off. Don’t put them on the thing anymore. Don’t listen to them. If you stop listening to them, the contention will drive down. It will stop. But you giving ear to all these things causes a problem. A woman says, “I’m just going to listen to them. They have their problems; I’m just going to listen to them.” Stop listening to somebody that is tearing down other people. Don’t add fuel to the fire so to speak.

(Proverbs 26:21) “Like charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire,  
So is a contentious man to kindle strife.”

(Proverbs 26:22) “The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels...”

Why does it say that? Because everybody wants to hear it. People listen better if I were to whisper than if I were to yell. “What’s he saying?” “He’s saying something really cool.”

“The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels,  
And they go down into the innermost parts of the body.”

(Proverbs 26:23) “Like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross  
Are burning lips and a wicked heart.”

(Proverbs 26:24) He who hates disguises it with his lips,  
But he lays up deceit in his heart.

(Proverbs 26:25) When he speaks graciously, do not believe him...”

A woman will say to her husband, “You’re just being mean.” No, he’s not believable honey. “But he says he is.” Don’t believe him.

“For there are seven abominations in his heart.”

(Proverbs 26:26) “Though his hatred covers itself with guile,  
His wickedness will be revealed before the assembly.”

Watch what the church does. They’re the pillar and support of the truth. “I don’t feel like listening. I feel like the church is off.” So, you’re the pillar and support of the truth? The church is. The church is there to protect the truth, knowing that in protecting the truth, we’re protecting the way, the life, and we’re protecting that soul as well as we are the others.

He talks to the dear lady, and he’s concerned that she in some way is going to be led astray. That she’s going to allow these things to come in.

Proverbs 26:28 says, “A lying tongue hates those it crushes,  
And a flattering mouth works ruin.”

I knew this guy that would get in trouble, but he said, “My mom will let it go.” I said, “How do you know your mom will let it go?” Then he said, “Watch.” He’d walk in the room, “Momma, you’re so wonderful.” Then she goes, “You’re my baby.” “Well, you know, I stole some things but I’m not going to do it again.” “I believe you.” I remember the guy, I’m going, “Wow, she fell for it.” Don’t fall for it. The Bible’s saying the way is truth. Let me say this, when there is true confession, there’ll be true change in the life. We’ve had people come, and they say, “We’re sorry, we’re sorry, we’re sorry.” When they come to me, I say, “You need to do this, this, this, this.” Why am I doing that? Because I want to see Jesus in the flesh. If I don’t see Jesus in the flesh, I don’t believe them because the deceivers are going out, and saying, “It’s not necessary for you to change.” But that’s our Gospel. Our Gospel is about the transforming power of God to make us into His image to be like Him. When there is genuine sorrow that is manifested, we rejoice. What a wonderful thing it is to see a life that is totally surrendered to God, and the true Spirit of God coming in the heart of man. But it is the true Spirit that brings forth change. So, as

we go through these pages, I hope we're not offending too many people, but if we are, I'd rather give you the truth and you be mad at me; because let it be known, I do it because I love you. It's not a self-righteous thing, it is something that I'm doing because I love.

**Closing Prayer:**

Father, we give You thanks for Your lovingkindness to us, for Your faithfulness to us. Lord, we pray that we would be faithful to Your word, to proclaim truth, the genuineness of change, that we would be like Christ. Lord, speak to our hearts even today. Humble us, that we might submit to Your will; that there might be that which is real and genuine in our hearts, Your Spirit of Truth.

Your head bowed and your eyes closed, we ask you to submit to Him. This is you putting all of your trust in Him. This is you surrendering your preconceived notions, your plans, purposes, or your desires; you're laying them all on the altar, and you're saying, "God, I just want to do what you tell me to do. I want to follow truth." If you'll do that, God will save to the uttermost.