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2 John 1:13 – True Love: Is Affectionately Attached

2 John 1:13: “The children of your chosen sister greet you.”

This is a book about *true love*. John, the elder is writing to the chosen lady, “I want you to love, but I want you to do it in truth.” You begin to realize that true love begins with truth. When you go back to 1 John, John makes that really clear. If you say you have no sin, you’re lying, and the truth is not in you. (1 John 1:8) How can you have a relationship with God? You can’t have a relationship with anybody if in fact you’re lying, or you’re being deceptive; there are no grounds for a relationship then. So, he begins to explain to the chosen lady what love is. Why would that be necessary? Well, according to the context, it is clear that there are some of her children following the truth, but then obviously antithetically, there are some that are not.

If you look specifically in verse 4, “I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth.” Now, the tendency when the others are not is to think “Well, they’re the squeaky wheel.” So, you need to put the grease on the squeaky wheel, right? I would say, you don’t want to follow that principle. That’s a worldly principle, and you don’t want to follow that one. What you’re going to find according to Scripture is that you don’t want to invest your time in a squeaky wheel. You want to invest your time in the ones that are doing the right thing, and unfortunately oftentimes the perception is “I’ll fix them,” “I’ll change them,” and “I’ll help them.” Then you put a tremendous amount of effort and time into the one that is not changing, and you go, “Why are they not changing? I’m doing everything that is wonderful, nice, kind. Generous.” Whatever else you want to put in, all of those alacritous sayings, or more specifically, altruism. The thought is “That’s me.” God says, “Correct. That’s you trying to save them.” When you and I begin to put our trust in ourselves, then there are no results; that’s fundamentally the principle of Galatians. If you sow according to the flesh, you’ll reap, what? Corruption. (Galatians 6:8) So, if it’s you doing the work, guess what? Nothing’s going to happen. If you sow according to the Spirit, you’ll reap life. What does that mean? It’s got to be God, Christ in you. You’ve got to be doing it God’s way. So, how does God say to fix things? He says to focus on those that are following Christ. Now, I know that kind of goes against the grain of the “rescuers” because the perception is “If I don’t rescue them, who will?” and God is going to show us who will.

The key is that we walk by faith, we don’t walk by sight. So, “faith” means that we’re trusting in God to do things that we can’t. That’s what faith is all about. If in fact it’s all about you doing it, you’re not walking in faith, and Scripture says that which is not of faith is sin. (Romans 14:23) So, you want to get off the path? Do you want to get on the wrong path? Which sin is “missing

the mark” or more specifically, you’ve wandered astray off of the right path. What does that say? It’s saying that once you begin to think that you’re the source that’s going to help, then you’re thinking wrong.

What does God want us to do? Well, He begins to display what true love is. He says, “First of all, you have to uphold truth.” In other words, the integrity of what is right; Scripture, Jesus, “I am the way, the truth.” You’ve got to put Him in the forefront, and you’ve got to want to do things His way. That’s where it starts off, truth.

(2 John 1:1) “The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth,

(2 John 1:2) for the sake of the truth which abides in us...”

Obviously, it all starts with truth, and that’s how you love. Once again, insincerity, disingenuous, that which is not real, and if in fact you love in your own power there’s no strength or power in that. Remember what John said, “In this is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us and gave Himself for us.” In other words, God is love. So, if you don’t know God, and God’s not the one loving through you, then you are anchored in something that’s not real. How can you really display true love if in fact you’re anchored in that? If whoever you’re loving, your goal is to get them to see you as the source of all blessings, then you’ve anchored them in something that’s one, not going to last, and two, that’s not going to be able to bring forth all those things that are necessary to bring them joy and happiness. Yet, you’re telling them in some way that you are that source. So, now, they’re living a lie. Now, you’ve got to anchor yourself in truth. You’ve got to rejoice with the truth. That is to say, your mentality is welcoming those things that are right and righteous.

1 Corinthians 13 talks about love, “Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness.” In other words, what do you get happy about? Well, sometimes our kids will come in and they did something seemingly right, but it had God out of the picture. Though it was perceived to be a good thing, I would say the mother would need to say something like, “Where’s God in all this?” “But I did something good.” “Yeah, but who are you glorifying? What the mother is doing in that particular case is she’s unwilling to rejoice in something that’s not going to be substantial or hold onto this child forever. She’s not going to cave and give them the affirmation of doing something that is not right with God. I’ve oftentimes heard people say, “My mom just won’t be happy till I’m going to church and loving God.” I’m going, “Right on!” That’s his point.

In fact, his statement in verse 4 is, “I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth.”

Of course, you go into 3 John, “I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.” But that’s their source of joy. Not that it looks like “They’re coming, they did something good today.” That’s not what I’m rejoicing over. I’ll rejoice when they’re pointing to Christ, and they love Him more than anything else. So, that’s where the joy is and as you go on

into 2 John 1:7-8, we're dealing with the perception that sometimes love has to be naïve. You turn a blind eye or whatever. But love is not clueless. It's not blind or shortsighted. Love is very wise. It knows what deception is, and it knows how to stay away from it. There's an interesting warning within the text when John is writing to this lady, and he says, "Now, you need to know that there are deceivers out there; and you need to be acutely aware of how they begin to distort the truth. You need to know how they operate, and you need to make sure that you're protected. So, that's a great text within the passage. Clearly, as we went on to verses 9-11, love doesn't aid or abet those that are doing wrong. You're not going to affirm them in any way.

Do you remember that passage with Jehosaphat in 2 Chronicles 19:2? There's nothing loving in helping the wicked and loving those who hate the Lord because then you bring wrath upon yourself, as well; and that's what the passage says. Sometimes the perception is "I'm going to be nicer than God." It's not going to happen. You don't want to encourage in any way if somebody is doing something wrong. I would say more specifically if they're not following Christ; if they're not heading towards that direction. If they're heading towards that direction, that's good. You can encourage them as they begin to head in that direction. If in fact they're rejecting all those things that are true, then you don't want to help. Oftentimes, I see the tendency and the longing to help somebody.

As the passage ends, in verse 12 where we looked last week, it's interesting how true love is very personable and very affectionate in a tangible way. We realize that true love really longs for that personal touch. You can get hugs from a person that's doing the wrong thing, but when somebody's doing the right thing, the hug seems to be different. When somebody really loves the Lord, sometimes you just feel like they hug you a little bit longer; they embrace you a little bit more sincerely and genuinely. You can feel it. Whereas the other feels to be kind of like a tap on the back or a "good to see you" type thing.

Once again, Scripture begins to reveal the truth of the relationship. As we come to the end of this passage, verse 13 is a small verse but it says a tremendous amount. It's a strange way to end, sort of like "goober says 'hi.'" "Hi to Goober." It almost feels like that kind of thing, but it goes far beyond that. It goes into the realm of "I want you to know why your sister's children are concerned about you." That's an interesting point because the passage doesn't say, if you read it with me, "Your chosen sister greets you." It doesn't say that does it? It says, "The children of your chosen sister greet you."

There's a great passage in Luke 7:35, a small verse but it reads something like this, "Wisdom is vindicated by all her children." In other words, if you do the right thing in the right way the children will be ok. It's an interesting promise. The problem is that we try to fix the children instead of trying to obey God. Our perception is that we fix the children instead of God. Does it say anywhere in the story of the prodigal son that the father was cajoling the son back or in any way trying to coerce the son back? Is there any text that seems to read that? It conveys that he was just at home. Now, God produced a famine. The son leaves the home, and wouldn't you know it, it just so happens that there's a famine at the time he does. You think that was an

accident? God in His sovereignty produces the heat that begins to light the fire and causes this young man to lose his bearings and realize that “where I am is horrible.” Up to that point he couldn’t see it, but God is able to show him that. You could sit down a young man, and say, “You don’t want to do that. You don’t want to go there.” He’s yawning and going, “Yeah, ok.” But I tell you, those hard knocks when God begins to speak to you, you start listening. It’s all to save, “but who can save better than me?” I can’t produce a famine. I wouldn’t know what to do to make somebody humble, but God is doing a work. When God does it, what does He do? He brings back a son, and the guy hugs his dad. He loves his dad. When was the last time his dad had a hug from him? When was the last time that he even cared about the relationship more than his inheritance? When was the last time that ever happened? Everything has changed. He sees everything differently. Now, who could produce that result? I can’t. You can’t.

So, as we look into this wonderful passage, he begins to talk about this true relationship and a relationship that is drawn together because of who this lady is and who her children are. The way the passage is defined in verse 13, “The children of your chosen sister.” Once again, we see that if you back up to verse 1, “The elder to the chosen lady.” So, the letter is written to the chosen lady, and now her sister is also declared as chosen which means that she’s been separated or called unto the Lord; she is a believer. So, “*eklektos*” is the word that is used. It makes reference to the fact that she’s elect; she’s very special. Now, the question is what makes her elect? If you go through Scripture, it’s defined in so many ways, but let me give you a few passages that refer to it.

In Matthew 24:31 it talks about those Christ will gather to Himself. He will gather them together, and the word that he uses is “*eklektos*”, which is “the elect”; “the chosen.” I love the way it’s written because it not only says He’ll gather together to Him, but it also says He will gather them together to Him.

My mother was talking to me the other day, and she goes, “You really believe that we’re going to see your dad.” I said, “Oh yeah Mom, we’re going to see him. We’re going to be gathered together with him.” What a wonderful truth that is when you think about that we’re uniting with one another, as well as we’re seeing His face, and it will all happen at the same time. No wonder the song goes, “What a day of rejoicing that will be.”

So, Romans 8:33 tells us that the elect are the ones that are justified by God. Once again, it will be used in the passage “those who are elect” and those He justifies and sanctifies; which are wonderful truths in the passage.

In particular, I like Colossians 3:12 because it begins to describe the character and nature of the elect. They are those who are holy, beloved, clothed with humility and kindness, merciful, meek, and patient. That’s a great picture, isn’t it? Those are the ones that are called “the elect.” In other words, on their garments, on their clothing, they look like Jesus. That’s how you can tell the elect, they start looking like Jesus. That’s why we’re drawn to them. That’s why in this particular letter, they say, “the children of the elect.” In other words, “the result of the woman

who was following God; who put on Christ and began to please Him in all that she did is that those children are now thinking like Christ.” How do you know that? Because they’re concerned about her sister. What children are concerned with their mother’s sister? They want it to be conveyed that they love her; that they’re thinking about her. That’s the fundamental point.

The way Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 1:2 is, “We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers.” Now, that sounds like somebody that’s thinking about somebody. (1 Thessalonians 1:3) “Constantly bearing in mind.” In other words, “I’m always thinking about your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father.”

(1 Thessalonians 1:4) “knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you.” He is drawn to them; he can’t stop thinking about them because they love God so much. In other words, where is Paul’s focus? You’ll never read in Scripture Paul going, “I’m really worried about all these people that are doing bad stuff.” You’ll always read, “I’m thinking about you that are doing good.” He will write to the church to correct them, but his focus will always be on the ones doing the right thing. In fact, he goes on to say in 1 Thessalonians 5, he says, “Look, you ought to appreciate all those that are serving God.” Once again, if your focus is always on those that are doing wrong, then you never have time to appreciate those that are doing right. Your thought is that by coddling or whatever you’re doing with the people that are doing wrong, that you’re going to rescue them; that’s not going to happen. I can tell you this, if you begin to build up the ones that are doing right, then God will begin to use that to convict the ones that are doing wrong. You’ll begin to see the Lord’s hand work in their lives. “Honey, I’m just not going to talk to you right now. You’re doing the wrong thing. Let me know when you want to do the right thing. Give me a call as soon as you start doing the right thing. Glad to talk to you. Love you so much. Bye.” It’s that kind of heart that won’t compromise truth. I don’t want my kids to sort of love the Lord, I want them to love God. Once again, the moment that they start turning, I’ll meet them as they’re running home, but they’ve got to be coming home. There’s got to be that desire to come home and fully realize the degree of their sin. As they begin to do that, how wonderful that is and how welcoming we should be.

There is an interesting passage in 2 Timothy 2 in which Paul specifically talks about the elect. Now, what we know according to Scripture is that you and I should not walk like the world walks. That is to say, if somebody is doing the wrong thing, we’re not going to be doing the wrong thing with them. That’s basically Ephesians 4:17, don’t walk like the world. Ephesians 5:7, don’t partake of the things that they partake in. Of course, 2 Corinthians 6:14, don’t be bound together with unbelievers. What fellowship do we have? So, you don’t want to bind yourself in any relationships with them.

According to 1 Corinthians 5:9, don’t associate with those that even call themselves Christians, but are immoral, covetous or revilers. “Well, if I don’t associate with them, how will they be saved?” God’s going to have to take care of that one, but I’m not going to associate with the things that they do so that I can save them. I’m not going to go to the bar and have a drink with

somebody so that I can bring them to the Lord because that's demeaning the integrity of righteousness. I am, every opportunity I have, going to talk with them about the Lord, but I can't have fellowship with them. When you read through Scripture, and you see Jesus Christ, you have to realize that Jesus is the personification of love, right? Jesus is God in the flesh; Emmanuel, God with us. So, Jesus in the flesh; why did Jesus leave the Gadarenes?

I thought "God so loved the world." Why would He leave the Gadarenes? They asked Him to. They said, "We don't want you around." He goes, "Ok," and He leaves. Why would Jesus turn to His disciples, as they're telling Him, "Well, you kind of hurt the pharisees' feelings." Then, Jesus says, "Leave them alone." Why would He say that? That's love talking; the personification of love. Why would He say that? It must be loving otherwise He wouldn't say it. So, when He's telling us to do something, it must be loving. Here again, you have to do it with the right heart. Your goal isn't to hate people. Your desire is to love them, but what's the best way to love them? In truth. You can't compromise the truth. So, I always thought it was bizarre when Paul writes to Timothy, he goes, "Demas having loved this present world, has deserted me." (2 Timothy 4:10) You would expect the next phrase in that text to be "and I'm praying that he'll come back." He says nothing. He then turns to the next subject. Paul knew that God is sovereign; that God will bring back and it's in His power, but if somebody has rejected Him, He leaves them in God's hands. He leaves them to the problems of the world. People begin to hit the wall. Don't get in the way of the wall. Let the wall hit. It doesn't mean Demas isn't going to be saved, but it just means that God is going to do the work in His life. It's sort of like the passage in which Paul says to the one that is in rebellion, "I've turned such a one over to Satan to the destruction of his flesh, that his soul may be saved." Which is a very clear message: Let the problems come in the flesh so that the person would come to Christ. When he's turned over to Satan i.e., the god of this world, he will beat him up. However, just like with Peter, Satan has requested to sift you, but when he's done, then you'll be able to encourage the brethren; but we're going to let him do his work. So, he does.

Paul writes to Timothy in this passage, and he says, "I'm willing to suffer." The question is, for who? The answer is, for the elect. Now, here's an interesting point, who are the elect? Well, we understand that when they come into the house of God, they're highly recognizable, as Colossians says. They put on the garb of humility and kindness and mercy, meekness and patience. We can see them, but what about the ones yet to come? That's an interesting question because there are those that have not yet come.

In 2 Timothy 2:10, Paul writes, "For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are," "eklektos," "...chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation." An interesting thing about the passage is that it's written in what is called a "subjunctive;" which means it's an action that hasn't yet happened. So, we're looking forward to these people coming to know the Lord. What is also interesting is that he's willing to suffer for those who are yet to come. So, we know there are those who have heard the truth, but we also know that there are those who have never heard the truth; and we don't know who they are. In fact, if you look at the phrase

in verse 10, "that they also may," look at the word, "obtain." It's a Greek word meaning to hit the mark; like with a javelin or throwing a spear. The way it's understood is that you throw the javelin, you happen to hit the mark without knowing that you did. In other words, without any kind of planning; it's not something that you sought. It's like you didn't see the bullseye, and you threw it, and you go, "I hit a bullseye!" The point of the passage is that you and I are going to be bumping into people that we never knew we were going to be bumping into and God is going to reveal to us. "That's the one that I've called." Then you're going to say, "Hey brother, you're an elect," because of the way they begin to respond, and they begin to gravitate towards the word of God and truth. They begin to embrace it, and Paul says, "I'm willing to go to jail."

An interesting example of this is when Paul gets thrown into the prison in Phillippi. The guard starts beating him, which he's not supposed to do legally. Then, Paul and Barnabas start singing in prison, and there's an earthquake. Then, the guard gets ready to kill himself because nobody is allowed to escape; he's in charge of them. Paul says, "Stop." Then this guy ends up being one of the guys. Who would have thought a Phillipian jailor is one of the guys that God had called before the foundation of the world? Who would have perceived that the woman at the well that had all these husbands and the one that she's living with is not her husband was one of the ones? We don't know who they are, and Paul says, "I'm willing to sacrifice for those that are." So, I just wanted to interject as well, that Corinthians is saying, "I'm not telling you to be estranged from the world. I'm telling you to look for those that are receptive to the Gospel. Don't go the way of the world, and don't fellowship with the way of the world, and don't encourage people doing wrong. Who knows, we might bump into our very next brother that we never knew we had. What a wonderful feeling that is as God begins to direct in our lives.

God is moving in our lives, and He has literally selected people that we never thought He would've. How amazing it is that they become our family. I think the way this text ends is interesting; that the children are concerned for this woman because she is the elect. It's like Jesus when He goes, "Who are My brothers? Who's my mother? Who's my sister? It's the ones that do the will of My Father." You feel family coming together because of that. So, there's a drawing, a concern and only God can make that kind of concern come out of, I would say in this setting, youth.

I want to end the passage in Romans 16, where Paul begins to talk about how he wants to be greeted. Once again, to emphasize "greeting," when it says, "greet her," it's talking about an affection that is shown and a sense of affirmation for what she's doing. It's a picture of embracing somebody and feeling close to them because of what they believe in and stand for. So, in Romans 16, Paul begins to mention all of these that he wants greeted. In fact, if you look in verse 5, "greet the church." Verse 6, "greet Mary." Verse 7, "greet Andronicus." All the way through verses 8 and 9, "greet." Verse 10, "greet." So, what does he want them to do? Greet, right. It's that picture of that closeness. We feel attached. Why do you feel attached to people? The name is very interesting because obviously, as you look at the names, they're not all Jews; which Paul is. Some of the names here begin to convey that these people were once from

families that worshipped other gods. I can probably go down the list and show you those, but they've been changed. Once again, it's like you bump into people you didn't know were your family, but now they are.

As he goes through the list, you begin to see those things that draw everybody together, and what is that? They all want to further the gospel, and there is a fervor to do this. As you look in the passage, Phoebe, at the end of verse 2, "she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well... Therefore, receive her in a manner that is worthy of her."

(Romans 16:3) "Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers..."

(Romans 16:4) "who for my life risked their own necks..."

(Romans 16:5) "...my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ"

(Romans 16:6) "Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you."

All the way through you see those that he feels close to because of their work for the Lord and because they were set apart for a particular work. It's obvious that they love God. It's obvious that they love Christ and they're drawn together. There is something unusual about the Spirit of God that unites the body because you start feeling a closeness to these people that you didn't even know. Some stranger could walk through the door and begin to tell me how they love Jesus and I'm just instantly drawn, going, "This is a long-lost brother. I've just found a long-lost brother that I didn't know before." It's just like an instant family member, isn't it? You find yourself being drawn to such a degree that you feel no closeness to earthly family. This is the family that is your family. I'm not telling you to divorce your family. All I'm saying is that there is this desire to be concerned for; you're thinking about; they're ever on your thoughts and this is why it says they asked to be remembered by you. They want you to know that they'll remember you. They're thinking about you. What a great way to end because what it really depicts is truth. If in fact there's truth, then what happens to you, chosen lady, walking in that truth, is that you begin to influence those around you. You go, "How do I do that?" Well, one is that God begins to shine His light and you show the testimony of Christ to others. That's one; but the main one is God begins to work on your behalf because you love Him. How wonderful it is that these children have now taken up the gauntlet and are now doing what their mother has always wanted them to do. Why was that? Because she simply obeyed God where she was. She walked in truth. Her children are now walking in truth. Truth produces truth. So, if you'll genuinely love God and genuinely follow God, God will vindicate through your children. It may not be today, but God will vindicate through your children. That's a great promise, isn't it?

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your lovingkindness and for Your truth that we see in Your word; the realization of Your power working in and through and among us, not because I do anything wonderful and fantastic, but because I loved You with all of my heart. I loved You with all of my heart and You worked on my behalf just like You did with Abraham for Lot. It was because You loved Abraham that You rescued Lot. You were rescuing him even before Abraham had a prayer for Lot. You had already sent Your messengers on behalf of the one that You called friend. Lord, I begin to realize that the greatest thing that I can ever do for my kids, the greatest thing that I can ever do for my friends, or anybody is to love You more than anything else. By virtue of that You begin to work good things around me. You do. That's what I believe. That's faith.

Your head bowed and your eyes closed, I'm asking you to walk by faith. I'm asking you to just clear the table and just say, "God, I'm going to love You, follow You, please You more than anything. I'm not going to compromise in this. I'm not going to acquiesce in any way. I'm not going to be mean or cruel about it, but I'm just going to embrace You with all of my heart. Those that are doing right, God, I'm just going to encourage all the more. I'm going to spend my time investing as Paul would say, 'invest in faithful men who will be able to teach others also.' I'm going to invest in those that are doing right." I'm asking you to believe that God will take care of the squeaky wheel. I know it's a miracle, but that's what faith is about.