

Daily Proverbial, from 2 John, 6 June 2013

The elder, to the lady chosen by God and to her children, whom I love in the truth—and not I only, but also all who know the truth. 2 John, verse 1.

Today we start a new book, the second of the epistles written by the Apostle John, one of Jesus' closest friends. It's a short book, only one chapter, and even as we take a few days to discuss it in more detail, it won't take long to do that either. But read it still: it's a glimpse into the past...and our future.

So, last night I was watching old videos online. I finished reading a book about Calvin Coolidge and wanted to see if there was any video of the 30th president. Indeed there is. In fact, you can watch a speech Coolidge gave from the White House in 1924 as it was the first speech ever filmed and recorded of a US president. In fact (again), you can look at video of every president going back to William McKinley, the 25th president, in 1897. Granted, there are no recordings of their voices before Coolidge's but I thought it was amazing to sit at my 2013 Dell laptop watching videos of men now dead for decades, men who once led the nation and, in their own ways, our world.

I wonder what it would be like to watch a video of the Apostle John reading his second letter. Or Jesus. I wonder what it would be like to watch a video of Jesus. I suspect – and this is conjecture – that neither of them would care about being on film. One might be amazed at it; the other might be indifferent; nobody really knows.

No matter, it's an amazing thing this letter from 2000 years ago. It, like the decades-old newsreels, is a view into the past. John greets his letter to an unknown woman. She may be a real person or a metaphor for the church (as a body of believers); the recipient isn't the point of the letter anyway. The point is to call us, from so long ago, immediately to the truth of the here and now. There and then that truth is the same as it is here and now for you and me: Jesus is alive and is God. God is Jesus is Spirit is true God and true man and true Spirit. The ultimate truth of all existence is that Jesus is love and Jesus' love is the truth. This truth is the foundation of all that is, is the law and judgment of all mankind, and is the hope, the promise, of eternal life.

Silent Cal knew that 90 years ago. So did William McKinley, and so have millions all over the world since the time of John the Evangelist. The book of 2 John is about Jesus and true belief in him. That's something worth knowing no matter when we live.

Lord, bless my understanding of Your Word.

Daily Proverbial, from 2 John, 7 June 2013

The elder, To the lady chosen by God and to her children, whom I love in the truth—and not I only, but also all who know the truth— because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever. 2 John, verses 1 and 2.

Yesterday we talked about how this short book calls us immediately to the real truth of life: that Jesus is God. Today we get a glimpse at how. And why.

See, the apostle John wrote this letter to convey this truth. He probably spoke with thousands of people in the many years of his ministry. Yet that wasn't enough. He wrote this letter to an expanded audience so that the truth would exist after he, John, didn't.

Think about it: what is learned lives on long after those who teach are gone. We bequeath ideas. We learned things when we are very young, and we still know them even though we're long since separated from the teachers who first taught us.

Yesterday, I went to the small Minnesota town where my mom was born and many members of my family are buried. I stood in the cemetery and talked with my grandparents; I must have made quite a sight. It's been nearly 20 years since my grandma passed on, and over 30 since Grandpa left. I remember the things they said and did. I remember the smell of Grandma's kitchen, and how Grandpa laughed at Laurel and Hardy movies, and the withering look he could give if you crossed him, and I remember that Grandma was the kindest person I've ever known. They've been gone now for many years, but they live on because I learned them, knew them. Now you know them too.

Just like you now know a bit about the Apostle John. If you never knew him before, you've read a few of his words here in this blog. Now you're friends. You learned; Jesus taught. It's how things are done.

And why? Because what Jesus teaches is designed for forever. It's not just to make life better here and now; that's only part of the reason. Good reason, too: for you to know that, when nobody else cares, Jesus does. But that, too, is only part. Eternity matters most. Here and now is such a short time. Forever is beyond our measure. Forever is where Jesus is, beckoning us to join Him and share in His happiness. The start of forever happens now, here, with Him reaching out to you through His Word and His friend John. Eternity face to face with Jesus is too good to keep a secret, so He reaches through thousands of years and thousands of people to teach you where you are that He's much more than we could ever hope for.

That's the truth John introduces.

Jesus, thank you for your eternal teaching, for reaching to us here, for loving me enough to do this.

Daily Proverbial, from 2 John, 10 June 2013

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, will be with us in truth and love. 2 John, verse 3.

There are only 13 verses in 2 John, and three of them – almost ¼ of the book – are taken up in greetings. If you read the letters from the New Testament, most of them start with some kind of flourish, some formal greetings. Indeed, when I read letters, emails, or messages I've written, I think that "Dear Whoever" is pathetically bland compared to the intentional and descriptive greetings with which the apostles started their correspondence.

That's because it is.

Perhaps that's one way that God gets our attention centuries after these letters were first written. Shakespeare is still read and understood in 16th century English and it gets our attention. William Faulkner is still read and understood in the southern dialect of the early 20th century American South. Eminem still rants and is understood in the visceral slang of 21st century Detroit. Perhaps people in 1st century Judea actually began formal written greetings this way; that could be part of it. Perhaps, too, Jesus the Christ wanted to get our attention in a way that would always engage and interest us; I'm sure that's most certainly true (or, in more ecclesiastical parlance, "amen").

And why does God want to get our attention this way? The answer is right there in the first four words of this verse: "grace, mercy and peace." Jesus has a message for us: God has grace, mercy and peace in store for us. Not just in heaven: He has those things for us here and now. They are real and tangible; they are gifts from God to help us persevere. They are gifts from God to share. They are gifts from God to use as tools here on the Third Rock. They are gifts from God to demonstrate...

...His truth and love. Jesus gives us grace, mercy and peace as proof of His truth and love. A true and loving person is graceful, merciful and lives in peace. Peace, grace and mercy are fruits of love and honesty. You can't have grace, mercy or peace without truth and love, and truth and love always allow grace, mercy and peace to flourish.

Jesus gave us this short letter of only thirteen verses to greet us with this news. He used flowery language to engage our interest so that we might read on and remember His grace, mercy and truth. He wanted to engage us, to remember those qualities, because He has a message to deliver that calls to our attention our need for his grace, mercy, peace, truth and love.

Dear Jesus, I need your truth and love today. Thank you for your grace, mercy, and peace.

Daily Proverbial, from 2 John, 11 June 2013

It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father commanded us. 2 John, verse 4.

It must make a pastor happy to see the people of his congregation living faith-filled lives. I mean, it must feel good to see people taking the message, the encouragement, the teaching that you impart as your career and then putting it to practical use. Teachers and mentors of all kinds get this feeling of satisfaction, but I suspect that it must be a particular joy to those called to specifically preach God's Word.

Admit it: it DOES feel good when someone you love takes something you said or did for them and does something good with it. It feels good to watch your kids succeed; in fact, my parents taught me that the biggest compliment a child can give to a parent is to succeed on their own using what they learned at home. It feels good to teach others, then watch them do things with the knowledge you gave them. It feels good to sit back and know you did a good job at whatever you did, watching others take the ball to run with it.

Imagine how it must make God happy to see us use the gifts He gives us in ways that further His kingdom.

If you aren't a believer, maybe the joy of seeing someone enriched by Christ is something foreign to you. There really is peace and happiness in watching others worship, live faithfully, and grow spiritually in Jesus. Community worship can be an extremely uplifting, joy-filled, exhilarating thing. So can private worship and devotion. In fact, the devotion my wife and I did just today talked about worship, about how worship can be both personal and corporate, individual and as a church body. Both are proper; there are places for both liturgical, formal worship and free-flowing unstructured worship.

That is so because God the Father Himself commands us to worship Him, giving Him our best no matter where we find ourselves. The more you study Scripture the more you see that this isn't because God is vain or arrogant: He is all love and knows that our understanding and acceptance of Him grows as we come together. He wants to share that love, to build us up through it, and one of those ways is by worship.

If you haven't worshipped the Lord lately, I'm challenging you to do it today. Whether in a church, or a group, or all on your own, take some time to marvel at God today, to give Him praise for how He's worked in your life, and to be thankful, open, and joyous.

Lord, forgive and strengthen me to worship You where I am today. I will follow Your lead; help me to walk in faith.

Daily Proverbial, from 2 John, 12 June 2013

And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. 2 John, verse 5.

Do you think John was writing to an actual woman or to a group of people? I suppose it could go either way, though as mentioned yesterday, there is evidence (in the language used) that he was writing to a larger group. This one seems pretty cut and dried. It says “dear lady.”

Or maybe not.

I mean, when you refer to a ship, it’s usually referred to as “she” or “her” and that isn’t a literal thing. Related groups or congregations are usually called “sisters.” And, thanks to pop culture, it’s acceptable to refer to both sexes as “you guys.” John may indeed have been writing to a specific woman, or maybe not. In reality, based just on this verse, we don’t know.

Can I ask why this matters?

The answer is that, to gain meaning from the verse, it really doesn’t. To think the audience of just this one verse – indeed the whole book – must be an individual, a woman, or a group loses the main point of the verse (and the book): Jesus is asking that we love one another.

Specifically, through the apostle, Jesus is reminding us once again that His first, primary, and most important command is to love others as He loved us. We are to love God fully with all our heart, mind and soul and, when doing so, we find that, to love God, we must love others. It’s almost a compulsion, as if God has given us something too good to hold on to. It’s so good that we feel driven to share it. Where it gives God and us great comfort to see those we love happy, that happiness comes first from loving them. That seems pretty simple; again, cut and dried, right?

Maybe not.

If it’s so simple, why do we fail to get along more than we agree? Why do we look for offenses where none were intended? Why do we hold on to grudges, enviously compare ourselves and find inadequacies, or plot evil against others who mean us no evil in return? Why do we play favorites, break promises, stray from the heart outward, or curse when we are blessed? You know the answer

So did Jesus and His friend John. Which is why he implores us at the end of this verse to love each other. When we lose sight of this simple request, we invite sin to reign. When we invite sin into our lives, it matters even less whether we’re alone or part of a group. As long as sin pre-dominates, love can get squeezed out.

Lord, love, forgive, and strengthen me to love others the way You love me.

Daily Proverbial, from 2 John, 17 June 2013

And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love. 2 John, verse 6.

Last week, my family took a few days off. We went to Virginia to visit family, sightsee, and spend a few days by the ocean. I always love going back east; it's so different there from the wide spaces here in Texas. I lived there for a few years, and, though I love my new home state, I miss seeing the land back east. It's full of charm, rolling hills, those tall green trees, and the power of the ocean.

On our last day there, my wife and I were sitting on a Virginia Beach balcony. We saw what I think was one of the more simple pictures of God's majesty. A solitary man was standing on the shore, just this side of the waves. He was praying, with his hands in the air, in the morning sunrise, with the blue-green ocean spread out before him. I felt moved by this picture because it spoke to me about what we look like standing before God. The space, the vastness of the ocean, the power and inestimable measurement of it: this set against a single, small man simply giving thanks and praise before all that majesty.

That man: it looked like he was walking in obedience to Jesus' commands. The foremost command was the same one given to Adam: to love God fully by relying on Him for everything. It was given to Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, all the prophets and kings, and the followers of antiquity through today. We are to walk in God's love by relying fully on God's love. When I saw the man praying beside the ocean I sensed what it must be like when God sees us. Or, more appropriately, when we see God. We are so tiny, almost insignificant when compared to the immense volume of God. And yet, that's not how God sees us. He sees us as valuable, unique, and special. He doesn't need us or anything about us, yet He chose us and wants to share His immeasurable love with us. He did it by coming here in the person of Jesus, living with us, loving and teaching, then dying to save us.

All He asks in return is that we walk through our lives following Him. Maybe take a few days to pray by the ocean.

I'll be honest: I'd like a few more of those days by the ocean. It's so restful to walk in the sand, listen to the surf roar, and watch the waves. What is more restful, though, is walking in Jesus' love, listening to the advice in His Word, and watching where He leads me. We don't even need to leave home to find Him.

Restful Lord, thank you for your love, your leading in my life, and for times to recharge in You.

Daily Proverbial, from 2 John, 18 June 2013

I say this because many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist. 2 John, verse 7.

Do you know someone who doesn't believe, doesn't have faith in anything? I know a few such people. They're friends, even a few who are family. With an honest heart I can't say any of them are bad folks, or indecent people, or unloved. For a myriad of reasons, they simply don't believe in Jesus.

I worry about them. I worry that, in a world that seems to be spinning more and more out of control in so many ways, when they finally do believe, they'll grasp onto the wrong faith. Not just any belief can save your eternal soul: only Jesus Christ can. John worried about this too, because in this book he acknowledges that to obey Jesus' commands means to love other people, then immediately mentions how there are many people in the world, even then, who denied that Jesus Christ was who He says He is and was. In John's day, there were Jewish scoffers who denied that their long-awaited messiah had come and risen. There were pagan Romans, Zoroastrians, and Persians: people who worshipped false gods and adored power. There were Greeks, who worshipped those same gods alongside the gods of reason and culture. And there were people whose love had grown cold, despite the constant rumors that God Immanuel had made His home among us.

Nothing has changed. Twenty-plus centuries have elapsed since John wrote these words and nothing much has changed. We know those people who don't believe. We love them, we are friends with them, and we cherish their company yet they don't believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He can save souls and impart peace. Even more, there are people in our midst who actively deny that Jesus is who He is, and that we must put our trust in other gods: gods of money, success, sole self-reliance, power, control, knowledge or consumption. This is nothing new; you've heard these arguments before. The people of John's day would understand them...just like you and me.

What will you say or do when someone in your life professes to you that they don't believe in Jesus? Will you witness? Will you listen and then lovingly disagree? Will you keep quiet and hope the moment passes? Will you stand your ground and stridently hold the faith-line? Will you deny just to keep the peace? What will you do? Don't be fooled: unbelief is deception and diversion is an antichrist. Will you be Jesus' ambassador or will you get along to go along?

Dear Jesus, speak for me. Help me to lovingly face the times when others don't know you and be You to them so they might learn to follow.

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Daily Proverbial, from 2 John, 19 June 2013

Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. 2 John, verse 8.

Is faith in Jesus just some Pavlovian gimmick? Believe and you get life. Do this for that. A leads to B. And what does John mean when he talks about being rewarded fully? This is pretty heady stuff for just one verse.

First, the gimmick thing. Nobody can take away our faith. Awhile back, I was trying to encourage a friend who was going through some really tough times; divorce, health problems, financial worries, disappointment and disillusionment. I encouraged her to hold tight to her faith, to trust that, even in such terrible times, God was working to build her up. It was at that point that I mentioned how nobody can take away our faith. We can give up on it, and we can deny or reject it, but nobody, not even Satan himself, can take away our faith.

If she denied her faith, did she lose her eternal reward? Perhaps yes and no. Yes, it would be lost immediately if she died; that eternal door would be shut. Even more pressing, though, is the prospect that we are part of heaven here and now, and as followers of Jesus, reaping rewards of peace, joy, honesty, and understanding here on this fallen earth even as we're molded for the eternity to come. Denying faith shuts us off from those undeniable blessings here and now. Logically, I can only ask why someone would do this. I've lived large swaths of my life with little or no real faith in Jesus and much active hypocrisy; I understand what it feels like to live without believing.

Yet I heed what John said as well, that unbelief is deceiving and that anything that isn't of Jesus is anti-Christ. I want those fruits of faith in my life. I cherish cherishing, love, peace, wisdom, understanding. More and more, I've come to thrive on the moments when I can share how I feel about Him because those moments are the fuel to persevere and the antidote to the bad times that surely happen.

So what about being rewarded? If we deny faith, we deny our place in eternity, both the eternity that we are part of now and the eternity in the world to come. If we deny that we believe and pursue other gods, we deny that those good things that are of Jesus are more important than what we are pursuing. Is it any wonder that unhappiness results? I know many people who don't believe, yet I can't honestly name one who I would describe as really happy. I don't think that's a coincidence. Perhaps the apostle would agree.

Lord, help me to better follow You. Cling to me as I cling to You, and help me to keep watch. Speak words in my mouth that others may come to know you too.

Daily Proverbial, from 2 John, 20 June 2013

Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. 2 John, verse 9.

This short letter deals with heavy themes. In the less-than-twenty verses that comprise 2 John, the book deals with grace, unconditional love, modeling Christ, deception, obedience, truth, anti-Christ, eternity and consequences. Let's talk about those consequences because this verse alludes to a few.

There's the obvious one, of abandoning Jesus' teaching: giving up Christ. There's the the consequence of that, namely the lonely abyss that is life without Him. And there's the idea that giving up knowledge is giving up God; so much for the idea of a moral secular education.

Yet there's one consequence that I've not mentioned but I read into from this verse: contentment. Are you ever satisfied with a cheater? Nobody I know, even the most Godly, likes it when someone cuts in line. We don't like to be cut off in traffic; we don't like it when people cut into line ahead of us; we don't tolerate those who break our laws to jump ahead of the legal system. We become discontented.

Here's the kicker: none of that matters. We are to be content with where we are in life, with running our own race, with who God has us to be and what we are doing with the hours He gives us. Just yesterday, I was listening to a podcast of a sermon my friend Patrick preached a few weeks ago. The gist of it was reminding us that 'we got nothin.' Without the Savior, we are nothing. We can never hope to be better than ourselves even as Jesus tells us that, to gain eternal life, we must be better than even the very best of humankind.

The trick of it is realizing that we got nothin on our own, so that we can admit this to God. When we do that, He fills us with contentment to run our own race. When we humble ourselves and admit our failings and our inadequacy before Him, He sees a repentant child who is fertile ground in which to grow a good crop of faith.

Part of humbling ourselves is realizing that we are where we are – who, what, where, and when we are – for God's purpose. That doesn't mean we should settle for what is bad, or compromise with hurt, wrong or evil. It does mean, though, that we should thank God for all our circumstances, then thankfully use the talents and means He gives us to make the most of them. We should do these things for His glory, for His kingdom. In this way, though we got nothin, with Jesus we have all we could ever dream of. Only in this is there true contentment.

Lord, thank You for where You have me. Thank You for providing all I have. I praise You and submit to You.

Daily Proverbial, from 2 John, 24 June 2013

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them. 2 John, verse 10.

Last night, my wife, son, and I watched one of the most amazing feats of evangelism I've ever seen. Nik Wallenda, heir to the moniker of 'The Flying Wallendas,' walked a 2-inch wide tight-wire across the Grand Canyon. We were glued to the TV, transfixed by the morbid possibility that the walk would fail and he would plunge to his death, as well as the equal likelihood that he might actually make it across alive. Thankfully, he succeeded; if you haven't seen it, check it out on Youtube because Wallenda did something completely unexpected.

No, it wasn't how he stopped down on the wire while 1400 feet above the bottom of the gorge. No, it wasn't the fact that he walked a flawless straight line through heavy winds without a net. The unexpected, amazing and (to us) really uplifting thing that Nik Wallenda did was that, all through this daredevil feat, he prayed.

That's right: for the entire 22 minutes, he prayed out loud and proud. "Thank you Jesus." "Praise to you Jesus." "You have authority over this wind, dear Jesus." "Calm this wire Jesus." "You are my savior Jesus." These are just a smattering of the things the fearless – yet fearful – daredevil said all throughout his high-wire walk. Not to be too skeptical, but while Wallenda is getting mentions on news programs today, I doubt many of them will talk about this. Listening to Bill Bennett this morning, Bennett did, yet when I surfed around the radio after that, I couldn't find anyone else talking about it. Maybe there are folks out there mentioning it, but I doubt there are many.

Yet the millions who watched Wallenda walk his wire welcomed him into their homes, transfixed like we were. Through it all, especially for the unbelieving, Wallenda 'brought it:' publicly, unabashedly, thankfully praying to his merciful Savior for protection, accuracy, and patience. And those prayers worked.

Sure, there are many who (might have a point when they) would say that Wallenda was simply saying something to calm his nerves. That's true, but prayer does that. There are many who would say that he was simply invoking the presence of the almighty to make sure nothing bad happened...and it worked! And there are many who would say it was a stunt...and it was, and the stunt man relied not just on his strength, but on God's.

At the end of it, I feel like I know the man, like we're friends, connected, like we were a part of what he did. On the biggest stage of his life, Nik Wallenda brought the teaching that Jesus Christ and only Jesus Christ saves and protects him, and anyone who watched welcomed him – and Him – into their lives.

Lord, protect me today as I walk the high wire in my life. I praise and thank you!

Daily Proverbial, from 2 John, 25 June 2013

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take them into your house or welcome them. Anyone who welcomes them shares in their wicked work. 2 John, verses 10 and 11.

Yesterday's blog was about walking a tight wire in faith. Today let's revisit that concept with a reminder of why it's crucial. Simply put, it's wicked. Further more, if we don't 'bring it,' we are wicked too. Wicked?

That's a word that doesn't get played enough these days. When I was a kid, 'wicked' was a wicked cool thing. Wicked cool; wicked awful; wicked fun; wicked neat; you get the picture. Pop culture appropriates what it likes, then changes the meaning for the sake of coolness, and the rest of us usually step in line. Wicked awful at it too. Or there's the Broadway play, "Wicked." From what I've heard, it's a lot of fun. It's the play about the witches of Oz. Wicked awful fun again.

But dictionary.com define wicked this way: "evil or morally bad in principle or practice; sinful; iniquitous." That's how Jesus depicted 'wicked:' evil. Morally bad. Sinful. Even iniquitous, as if simple iniquity itself weren't bad enough that we make it into a character trait. What the Apostle John said wasn't coolly descriptive or delicious entertainment. He said that if we welcome, invite, and encourage someone in living a life away from Jesus, we share in their evil behavior. Worse, we're an enabler. Evil. Not bad, not mistaken, not slightly over the line: evil.

And yet, how do we balance this living in a world where most people want to do good but, by nature, aren't inherently good? I mean, even if we believe and even if we follow Jesus and do all He expects of us, there's no getting around the fact that we're still living in the land east of Eden. We're all sinful, and we all know people who are our friends, family, co-workers, acquaintances and so-forth and aren't we judging them harshly if we don't give them the benefit of the doubt?

Sadly, yes. That's part of our mission.

We shouldn't trust our feelings: we should trust our knowledge of God. If one's conscience sticks that whatever it is we're doing isn't right, then it probably isn't. If our friends tempt us into doing those things, it's probably not right either. The right thing to do is turn away from it. Shut the door, turn off the light, don't compromise with evil. We can't parse evil and take it on a little bit at a time: we can only fight it with Jesus and stay away.

If we don't, we're wicked. We're inviting wickedness into our lives, our homes, and hitching our star to it. We're joining ourselves to wickedness and becoming wicked ourselves.

Lord, preserve me to turn from wickedness

Daily Proverbial, from 2 John, 26 June 2013

I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete. 2 John, verse 12.

I wish we could talk about these things in person. It's only been a recent development (as in 'within the last few years') that I could say that. Before the recent past, I would have been nervous to talk with you about matters of faith. True, I used to canvass, handing out fliers, or inviting people to church or events or such. And in personal or intimate groups, I would gladly speak up about what I believed or thought. But not like this.

Now, I'd rather talk with you one on one. I'd rather we had a chance to see each other's faces, to gauge our body language, to hold hands and pray together. These things we talk about, we read about, we learn together: they're important. They are life and death. I'm thankful that we have at least this medium with which to communicate, but I wish it could be more. Thanks be to God that it is what it is.

You and I: we may know each other well. Or, it may turn out that we don't know each other that well at all. A lot of water passes over the dam for us. Time, distance, work, circumstances, and any number of things keep us from getting together, maybe having a cup of coffee or glass of wine, and just talking. Not long ago, I wouldn't have opened my heart about things that really matter to just anyone. Maybe to a select few, but not to folks I don't know well, or don't see very often.

Not anymore.

Yet make no mistake in this: if you enjoy reading this, or understand meaning, or are encouraged, enriched, or enlivened by anything you read here...all glory to Jesus, not me. No matter how we communicate, all glory to Him.

Yet I still wish we could talk about matters of the heart in person. About why faith matters; about how Jesus acts, moves, teaches, and works in our lives; about times we've felt encouraged and times we have simply known that we were children of God; even about times when we felt doubt, loneliness and anguish, and how we questioned our faith. Like John wished, I wish we could do these things in person to that we could share these times as personal friends instead of just personal friends via pen, paper, or the miracle of electronic interchange.

But again, let's always remember that no matter how we share our time with Him, when we share that time as followers, all glory to the Risen King.

Jesus our King, thank you for letting us share by so many means our faith in You, and how You ennoble our lives with your eternal love.

Daily Proverbial, from 2 John, 27 June 2013

The children of your sister, who is chosen by God, send their greetings. 2 John, verse 13.

Here ends the book of 2 John. It was just a couple of weeks ago that we first started looking at it and we're already done. Before continuing to the 3rd and final epistle written by the Apostle John, let's consider that he ends this letter as he began it: with a mysterious allusion to a lady.

Just like we started, we could speculate that this lady is a real person, that he wrote the letter to a specific woman to encourage her, and that the letter became part of canon scripture through sharing, usage, and tradition. There's something to be said for that interpretation. There's also something to be said for the thinking that 'the lady' is the church as a larger body. That, too, is supported by the entirety of the book.

And, like we originally concluded, it really doesn't matter.

It really doesn't matter because, whether it's the lady or the church, she is chosen by God. God Himself, from eternity yet here and now, has chosen your sister – and your brother, your mother, your friend, and YOU – for His own purposes. Are you chosen? Sure, there are days when you and I don't feel very chosen. Yesterday was one such day for me. I hadn't slept well the night before. My work day was tedious, busy, rushed, and burdened (literally) with hundreds of messages and small details that complicated every moment. Even when I tried to relax, all I found was a swarm of bugs, smelly lake water, and catching up on news that went from skeptically bad to undoubtedly worse.

And yet...

...And yet, at the end of the day, I wrote these words from a hotel room of luxury. I had persevered and overcome through the day's challenges, retired to a paid-for room in an upscale hotel where I had fresh water, air conditioning, several rooms of space, and a luxurious bed. My family was well and cared for. I hadn't been plagued by disease, hunger, threats, or real hardship. And I didn't have to do anything to have had all this drop into my lap. God simply provided. I didn't deserve it, earn it, merit it, or even have it coming. There are many more who are in bigger need than me, yet He simply provided for me, having me where He has me for whatever reason He is playing out.

I'm chosen.

So are you.

So was John.

So was the lady to whom he was writing, whoever she was. And, after reminding her that she was chosen – and thus richly blessed by the God-man Jesus – John signed off his letter. Let's you and I do the same.

Lord Jesus, thank you for the words of your friend John, and for choosing me. Bless me by being more in my life, leading me wherever You will.

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