

Text: 2 John 12-13, 3 John 13-14

Title: Seeing is Rejoicing

Truth: Christians rejoice to see one another.

Date/Location: August 4, 2019 at FBC

Introduction

We learned from 2 John 7-11 about people who profess(ed) some kind of religion but do not abide in the true teaching of Christ. These deny the true faith and are opposed to Jesus Christ. John's warning to true Christians was this: don't support that kind of religion, even with hospitality in your home or a Christian greeting, for doing so assists evil and will cause you to lose your reward.

Sadly, this past week we had something of a live example of a departure from the faith. A well-known author Joshua Harris in the late 90s and early 2000s wrote a couple of books about (not) dating, and more recently pastored a mega church. He now has been divorced from his wife and says that he is not a Christian anymore. He disavows what he wrote earlier in support of the Christian "purity culture" as it is called. He has embraced all sorts of error with regard to marriage and sexuality. The case was so shocking that it made major news headlines.

Yesterday I spoke with Pastor Perry Reddy on the phone. During the course of our conversation, he said some very helpful things. One was that we have to *continue* with the Lord and keep on going until the end. We cannot fade out or depart. This is what theologians call the doctrine of perseverance. He said that the world is full of temptations and many people fall into those things. But we must not be allured by them. Instead we desire to be obedient to the Lord. We can do nothing without the Lord—that's really true regardless of whether we recognize it or not, but when we recognize it, and follow Him, we can successfully continue to the end.

I. The Final Two Verses of 2 John, 12-13

A. The apostle John says that he has many things he could write. Evidently he has a lot on his mind that he has decided not to write about. He does not indicate whether this would be of general interest, or if it was particular to his relationship with the lady and her children. We need not bother our minds with the thought that we might be missing something, for God has given us everything we need for life and godliness. The Scripture as it stands in 66 books is completely sufficient for the Christian

life. If there were more important Christian things, we can be assured that those are already covered elsewhere in the Bible.

1. See the “omission” mentioned in Revelation 10:4.
 2. This is also like Luke 24:27 where we do not get any detail on what the Lord drew out of the Old Testament about Himself. We might wish for those details, but we can reconstruct them with our own careful study of the Old Testament. In fact, we have done some or much of that in our own studies together here at church.
- B. Writing would be with **paper and ink** (at the time, actually papyrus and ink). This was probably a more expensive and difficult thing to do than the writing technology that we have (bulk paper and ball point pens, or word processing software and email), though the effect is the same. A papyrus sheet would be large enough to contain the whole of the letter of 2 John. But writing a lot could get expensive, and who knows how much time and cost was involved in delivering a letter over any kind of distance.
- C. Instead of writing, he wishes to see them in person, **face to face**. Why does he want to see them? He says explicitly: **that our joy may be full**. It is better to see each other than to be pen pals all the time. And then John can experience some Christian hospitality from this family.
- D. John closes with a report of greetings from the lady’s nephews and nieces whose mother is also a believer chosen in Christ for salvation. Evidently John is staying with or near this sister, perhaps in Ephesus in the closing years of his earthly ministry. Greetings passed like this show Christian love and concern. They mean somewhat more than “say hi to so and so for me.” They show that those sending the greetings care about the recipients, and are thinking of and praying for them. These words are not just empty space-filler. They are important.

II. Implications

- A. There is something lacking in writing. We intuitively understand this. Emails can accomplish something, but only so much. Texting and tweets are even worse! They miss facial expression, body language, tone of voice, empathy, etc. But sometimes it is the best we can do in our communications because of whatever constraints. And, God did see fit to give us the Bible in written form. So there is nothing wrong with it as far as it goes. And it is easier and less expensive for us to write today.

- B. The fact that John wrote what he did indicates the urgency of his main ideas. This reminds me of Jude 3. In light of the danger of apostates and of the believers losing their reward, he had to write quickly. He tells the lady and her children to love one another and to avoid losing their heavenly reward by being discerning in their exercising of hospitality toward itinerant teachers. Love does not extend to helping those who have left the faith and deny the doctrine of Christ. (Remember what we said the doctrine of Christ is? It concerns His divine and human person, and His saving work on the cross, including his incarnation and resurrection).
- C. I glean from John's approach here (not writing a bunch of stuff at the present time), that some things can wait. Whether you are on the writing end or the receiving end, this is the case. It is not the end of the world if you don't write those things or say them right now. In fact, some of the "important" things you wait to write or say will become irrelevant, go away, or you will realize they are less important than you think, and you will be saved potential trouble of opening your mouth (or pen) and embarrassing yourself!
- D. True fellowship, based on the truth of Christ, is a complete joy. We had a time together "face to face" on Friday night for the Vacation Bible School workers and families. The food was great, the weather was pretty much perfect, the kids of all ages played nicely together, and the adults got to relax and talk to one another. It was an enjoyable time after a week's ministry. Imagine forever time even way better than that.
- E. Take note that John **hopes** to come to see his friends. He does not know for sure if that will happen. Even the great apostle is unable to guarantee that he will make it. In the same way, we may hope to accomplish something but we cannot know for sure. If the apostle could not know, neither can we know. Some things may end up being left undone if God doesn't permit them.
- F. We have no certainty about when this letter was written, but it may be toward the latter part of John's life. Yet it does not seem that John is extremely pressed for time, because it would take probably far longer to make the trip than to write what he wanted to write. Then again, if he wanted to write a book-length missive, I may be wrong about that.

III. 3 John 13-14

- A. John writes his third epistle, another short one, and ends it in a similar way to 2 John. He repeats that he has many things to write. Perhaps his

current situation and the recent events in his life are subjects on his mind in both letters.

- B. He wishes to come and see Gaius soon so they can speak face to face.
- C. He closes the letter with a wish for peace and bi-directional greetings of the fellow believers.

Conclusion

I sense a bit of a connection here with the concept of walking by faith in contrast to walking by sight. The idea comes from 2 Corinthians 5:7 and speaks about our current “faith-walk” in light of the fact that we do not see the Lord. We are currently absent from the Lord if we are alive on this earth. He is in heaven. Our departed Christian loved ones are there too. We cannot see God or Christ presently.

But we shall see Him. Then we will walk by sight. True, our faith will not subside or go away, but that aspect of faith which is forward looking will be different.

Faith implies distance; sight implies closeness. Faith has to do with promises and sight with fulfillment. Faith deals with expectation, sight with presence. Faith is attached to hope, and sight is attached to realization. John was not able to experience sight and presence and closeness with his friends, but he hoped to do so by traveling to see them. Such is the lot of finite creatures with limited traveling options.

Few people have seen any of God. Moses, Abraham, Elijah, and others did. But none have seen all of God, for to do that would be certain death. But in the heavenly kingdom, “we shall see His face” (Revelation 22:4). Then our faith will be sight, and a glorious sight at that.

Back to the point of what John is writing...I draw from John’s note the principle that Christians rejoice to see one another. Those separated by distances of space and/or time who know one another and are close as brothers and sisters enjoy a reunion. It is abnormal and out of place when Christians do not want to get together with their brothers and sisters. You haven’t seen your loved ones, and those who love you, for a week? That sounds like a great time to get together and enjoy one another’s company, worship together, learn together, and serve together. Has it been longer? A month? Two or three months? Why are you holding back like that? Don’t you like your fellow believers? Don’t you feel something missing in your life when you have no fellowship?