

Text: 2 John 7-11

Title: Full Reward

Truth: To receive a full reward from Christ, do not support false teaching.

Date/Location: Sunday July 21, 2019 at FBC

Introduction

Many New Testament books are concerned, at least in part, with dangers to the Christian faith, primarily false teachers or false prophets (“wolves” in Acts 20:29). See if you can list the New Testament books with their particular chapters:verses that do this. For example: Matthew 7:15, Mark 8:15, Luke 20:46, John 10:1...2 John is one of them.

I. Connection to the Prior Verses, “For” or “Because”, v. 7a

- A. The connection of verse 7 with the previous is important. Verse 7 begins with “because” which indicates that it is giving the reason for what was said earlier. Verse 6 ended by exhorting the readers to walk in the love command. They must continue to live in love toward God and their neighbors. This is because (and here is the connection), many have *not* continued in love. Instead, they have left the faith that they professed and have gone out into the world, including embracing false teaching. They have become apostates, and some have gone so far as to become teachers of false doctrine traveling around preaching their false version of Christianity. Instead of walking in love, they have walked out.
- B. The danger in not walking in love is that you may turn into one of these people. Furthermore, denying the Lord Jesus Christ and going out into the world is the farthest thing from love. It is not loving to deny the essential truth of the **person and work of Christ**. That is a sure way to send others off to eternal punishment.

II. Description of the Problem-People, v. 7

These ones who have left the faith are characterized in four ways:

- A. They are called **deceivers**. Evidently they were not keeping their beliefs to themselves. Not surprisingly, they want to gather others who agree with them, and they do so by teaching their “doctrines of demons” as if they are gospel truth (1 Timothy 4:1).
- B. They have **gone out into the world**. They are like Demas who loved this present world, and like those in 1 John 2:19 who left the church. John affirms that they left because they did not share the same belief (“they were not of us”). Their leaving made this clear. Perhaps they went out

into the world as a secularist; or perhaps they went out to start their own itinerant ministries (see verse 10).

C. They **do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh**. Carefully note this characteristic.

1. This text does not speak of people leaving the church for small reasons. Trivialities are not in view: “I’m leaving because I don’t like the church’s music” or “I’m leaving because the preaching is boring” or “I’m leaving because I want more activities for my children.” We are not saying those types of folks are apostates. They certainly could be much more wise and loving in their approach to church membership, but we won’t get into that at the moment!
2. Rather than trivialities, John is saying—and we are repeating—that these folks were leaving the church/faith for a much deeper reason. “I’m leaving and starting my own gig because I deny what you believe about Jesus Christ.” That is deadly serious. It certainly is not Christian.
3. I mentioned above about the **person and work of Christ**. How did I get that out of the phrase “Christ as coming in the flesh”? I say **the person and work of Christ** because I believe John is implying all of that. Even though the text is speaking specifically of the incarnation, this has a number of inseparable implications:
 - i. Since Christ came in the flesh, that must mean He existed before coming in the flesh. His preexistence implies His **deity**.
 - ii. Since Christ came in the flesh, that means He took on humanity. He is both fully God and **fully man**.
 - iii. The reason that Christ came in the flesh was to have a human life to give as a ransom for many. Without the incarnation, there is no propitiation of God’s wrath; no resolution to the sin problem; no eternal life; and no salvation. That is the **work of Christ**.

Therefore, to deny that Christ came in the flesh means more than just denying the incarnation in some abstract way. These are people who have denied the basics of the faith. The Greek text indicates that it is their characteristic, ongoing belief system.

D. Such people are **deceivers and antichrists**. This reiterates what was said earlier about deception and adds the new feature of “antichrist.” Not

“**the Antichrist,**” but “**an antichrist.**”¹ This simply describes the person as someone who is against Christ. Denying Christ coming in the flesh is not a neutral thing. It is an attack against Christ and Christians and God.

Now, although we know people are either believers or unbelievers (two categories), we can speak of those who don’t share our faith under two more subheadings: those run-of-the-mill unbelievers, and those who are particularly “against” Christ. Have you encountered such people in evangelism? They need help!

II. Warning About Receiving a Full Reward, v. 8

- A. Verse 8 calls us to pay attention to ourselves. The danger is implied, but I believe it refers to our treatment of the false teachers. We can lose our footing on the way of Christian love if we get “mixed up”² with people like that. Perhaps we could give them aid and comfort, or support them somehow, or follow their teachings. Whatever the case, it is a significant danger that implies we have to pay attention to something that is a hazard. I’m sure you have seen the sign “Beware of Dog” on some houses. That’s the point—watch out!
- B. We can lose real heavenly reward by not using discernment in how we deal with people who deny Christ. If someone pushes a doctrine that denies the coming of Christ in the flesh, then we walk in love by “denying them.” It is love to show the false teachers that they are in the wrong, and it is also love to protect our families and our church from false teaching. Love is not naïve or accepting of all who claim Christ.
- C. What is this reward idea? Several Scriptures indicate that the Christian will receive a reward from God for faithful service in this life. That reward can be increased or diminished based on your conduct. The reward is given when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10).
1. See 1 Cor. 3:14-15 (reward), 4:5 (praise), 2 Corinthians 5:10 (what is due), Matthew 16:27 (reward), Ephesians 6:8 (receive the same back/reward), Revelation 22:12 (wages/reward).
 2. Notice that these rewards are often said to be the result of “works.” Indeed, “works” are important and significant—not to be saved, but

¹ The Greek text has the article in front of *deceiver* and *antichrist*. Although I don’t know the exact classification of this article (see Wallace), I do know that since there are many such false teachers, we cannot be talking about the one singular future Antichrist.

² We are not to get mixed up with folks who are influenced or pushing false teaching. But we are to evangelize them. Those are two different things.

as saved people, we do them in obedience to God. And God is pleased to reward His people for their faithfulness.

- D. The main “work” on John’s mind is how we handle the deceivers and antichrists. They wanted support so they could make a living, and they were receiving some of that support from hosts who put them up in their homes, or supported their labors in other ways. It is this hospitality ministry that is the focus of the next portion of John’s letter. But first...

III. A Basic Test of Salvation, v. 9

- A. The apostle John delineates two types of people. 1) Those who transgress and do not abide in the doctrine of Christ; and 2) Those who abide in the doctrine of Christ.
- B. The big idea is easy: If you abide in the doctrine of Christ, you “have” both the Father and the Son. That means you are saved. You have a relationship with God the Father and God the Son (through God the Spirit). On the other hand, if you do not hold to the doctrine of Christ, and “transgress” = cross the boundary into heterodoxy, then you do not have God. That means that you are not saved, period. See 1 John 2:23.
- C. What takes a little more thought is this question: What exactly is *the doctrine of Christ*? Is it 1) the teaching of incarnation; 2) the entire body of “Christology” from your seminary textbook; or 3) the interconnected truths alluded to already in the letter? I take the last interpretation. As we already suggested, the incarnation is part of something larger that must be believed. The doctrine of Christ should not be construed to include only stuff about Christ personally, but about what Jesus taught. This includes the ideas of walking in truth, walking in obedience, and walking in love, the triad that we examined in the prior section. That is what Jesus taught us (John 17:17, 14:15, 15:10). To put it simply, the doctrine of Christ is not just the doctrine *about* Christ. It *is* that, *plus* the teaching that Christ revealed to us—to walk in love and truth and obedience.

IV. What to do With Those Who Have Left the Faith, v. 10-11

- A. The person who has “left the faith” demonstrates they never “had” the faith. But permit me to use the language of “leaving.” These ones who deny the truth of Christ—about Christ and from Christ—have departed from the faith. Since *they* have departed, there is no value or blessing in God’s people giving them favorable recognition.

- B. John instructs us with a command: if such a one comes to you, in the context of seeking hospitality, then you are to respond in two ways:
1. Do not receive him into your house. Do not provide lodging. To do so is to provide material support to an enemy of God.
 2. Do not greet him. Even a warm and friendly greeting shares in his evil deeds. You don't want to lose your reward, right?
- C. Reiterate again in your mind this fact: this is a command. We don't override it because we are politically correct or post-modern or ecumenical or just afraid of being disliked. We *obey* what God has said. If you want to "soften the blow" of this, you remind yourself that the people who fit this category are those who are trying to destroy true Christianity. That is not cool.
- D. God doesn't have to give a reason to obey Him, but He often does give us such justification. Here, it is that we don't want to share in evil and thus lose any of our reward in the future kingdom and new creation.
- E. Is it rude not to greet someone? Perhaps you don't know if they fall into this category or not. So, you cannot know whether to greet them or not...so what do you do? I don't take the text to put you into an unreasonable kind of pickle. I think we can say 'hi' and figure out who the person is. But when we find out that the person is a heretic of this sort, we don't greet them in the name of the Lord and bless them and wish them well and all that.

If they need housing, what then? Human compassion would seem to override this command, wouldn't it? I don't take it so. Their 'god' can provide for them, not the people of the Christ they speak against.

Some years ago I met some JW's who were out preaching their false doctrine as I was sharing the gospel. They wanted to greet me like a brother, and I did not want to do that back to them. This passage was in my mind. They are out there telling people an anti-Christ message. I cannot extend to them affirmation as Christians, because they aren't. Socially not polite? Sure. Honoring to God? Yes.

This imperative does not preclude sitting someone down, even in your front room, to speak to them about the gospel. It does not allow you to shirk the responsibility of evangelism to all kinds of unbelievers.

Conclusion

This is all a bit of a downer. We always have to be watching out for false teachers who come along and attempt to deceive our reward from us.

We exist on a footing of suspicion until we make sure a person is bringing the right doctrine. But this is wise, not foolish.

But we can also think of our hospitality responsibility from the positive side. We can enhance our service to God, and thus our reward, by providing hospitality to those who believe the right things. We can help in the mission endeavor by providing help to those missionaries who are honoring Christ. When missionaries are visiting, the church provides them housing, even long-term housing for a furlough, for example. This is a significant support, saving the missionaries a ton of financial burden and blessing them tremendously.

MAP

Notes from J. M. Boice's Commentary on 2 John

The danger is not so much in secularism, still less in communism or any other obviously anti-Christian system. The danger is in that which goes by the name of Christianity but which excludes the true Christ. It is in religion without the true God and that one mediator between God and man, even the God-man, Christ Jesus.³

First, we must note that John is not talking of all error but only of that which comes under the guise of Christianity. In other words, his expressions here cannot be used as the basis of a refusal to talk to non-Christians or to hold dialogue with adherents to another religion or philosophical system. Second, he is not even referring to all those who are in error within Christianity, but only to those who are teachers of such errors in the name of Christianity. All others should presumably be loved and instructed. Finally, he is not even referring to all teachers who err but only to those who are in error on the most fundamental truths and who are actively proclaiming their heresies. Obviously, there is no teacher who is 100 percent free of error. Yet we encourage them and learn from them. It is only when professing Christians teach the most anti-Christian doctrines that we are to deal so harshly.⁴

Examples of False Doctrine About Christ

Natural theology can save people.

³ Boice, J. M. (2004). [*The Epistles of John: an expositional commentary*](#) (p. 164). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

⁴ Boice, J. M. (2004). [*The Epistles of John: an expositional commentary*](#) (p. 165). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

There are other ways of salvation outside of Christ.

Other religions can help people come to God.

Contrast these false ideas with Acts 4:12 and 1 Timothy 2:5 and John 14:6.