

# *Who Do You Say That I Am?*

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository  
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

112- Jesus Chooses His Apostles- Part 9

John- Part 3

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Church September 8, 2024

## **Matthew 10:1-4**

**1 Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.**

**2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;**

**3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;**

**4 Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.**

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;  
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Now this is a section of Matthew's Gospel Record that has become sort of a small mini- Series in itself as we look closely at the men whom Jesus chose to be the Apostles of the Lord. And I pray that you have found this Study of these twelve men to be very interesting. And I pray that you have also found this Study to be very encouraging because you have found that these men were very Common and very Ordinary men; and yet they were called and chosen and equipped and empowered for a very powerful and earth changing Ministry.

And this is very *consistent* with the Way that God chooses people. Most of the Time- God deals with the most common of people. He deals with the Poor; the Uneducated; and those who are Unimportant- as far as the World is concerned. God uses those who consider themselves to be Weak and Feeble; and God uses the people that the World looks down on; people that the World despises. And God uses these "Nobodies" to literally alter the course of History and to bring great Glory to His Own Name.

So, this mini- Series has been about the Apostles- the men that Jesus called and chose and used to begin the Christian Church; the men God used to first,

receive; and then, *write down* the final, full, and completed Revelation of God that we call today, the “*New Testament*” or the Books pertaining to the promised “*New Covenant*”.

Now I have said this before- but we should always remember that these men *should have* failed in their Mission. Many people have failed in the Mission that God gave to them- and their Mission was not nearly as difficult as was the Apostles’. So, they absolutely *should have* failed- but they *didn’t*! They succeeded! And they succeeded against *unbelievable* odds. They succeeded against intense and relentless Persecution from both the Jews as well as the pagan Gentiles- including the might and power of the Roman Government.

They also succeeded against *unbelievable* Attacks by the devil himself- who fought the Apostles with multitudes of false Teachings and Heresies and Doctrines of Devils. And they succeeded even though none of these men ever gained any personal financial Benefit from their Efforts; and they succeeded even though each one of them- with the single exception of John- was brutally martyred for their Efforts. But the fact that these men did *not* fail and the fact that they *succeeded* in their Mission- is one of the most astounding Accomplishments in all of human History.

So, try to understand the level of Success that the Apostles achieved- by using this Measurement: Today- if any Individual; or Group; or Church desires to be in Right Standing with God- they **MUST** also be in Right Standing with what the Apostles wrote (or had written) in the 27 Books of the New Covenant! In other words, there is no such thing as *anyone* or any *Group* being in Right Standing with God while being in Contradiction to what these men wrote down.

Now over the last few weeks- we have been looking at the Apostle John. And as I told you in previous Sermons- even though John was initially a very volatile, brash, ambitious, fiery, violent, hard, and impulsive man- God *tenderized* John; and took a man, who *began* his Walk with God as a violent and hard man, and God *fashioned* and *molded* him to be a man of both Truth and Love.

And God did that, in large part, through the *abundance* of Suffering that John was allowed to experience. And that is a Characteristic that was common with all of the men Jesus chose to be Apostles. They were men of great Power and Anointing and Comprehension. They were men of great Love and Mercy and Compassion. But they were also men who suffered greatly.

Now it is commonly taught that people can do great things- **IN SPITE OF**- the Sufferings they endure. But I disagree with that Statement. I think that people do great things for God- **BECAUSE** of the things they suffer. In other words, without the Sufferings- they would have never accomplished what God called them to do. So, Sufferings were **NOT** things that the Apostles had to *overcome*-

Sufferings were the Tool that God used so they would accomplish what God called them to do.

And this is true with ALL genuine Believers. Jesus promised us that we would all suffer. So, Sufferings are NOT things to be cast out; or overcome; or even avoided. Sufferings are to be RECEIVED and ENDURED. And it is in the faithful Endurance of our Sufferings where the greatest amount of Change occurs.

So, because we are all Sinners; because we are all Human; because we are all Fallen; and because we are all starting out quite *differently* from where God desires us to be- Sufferings are given to us in the form of Persecutions; Afflictions; Trials; Tests; Tumults; or even physical Attacks. So, our Good God allows satan to periodically “buffet us”- so that through the Fire of our Sufferings- we may change and become what God desires of us.

So, we *cannot*; and we *must not* separate how these men suffered from who these men were- because they were who they were- in great part- precisely *because* they suffered such horrific Sufferings- and *that* Aspect is completely different from those who lay claim to being Apostles in our day.

And so, we should all pray to that End- that God would be Good to send great and horrific Sufferings to the men, who stand in the Pulpits of our Churches. And that God would grace these men with great Persecutions; great Afflictions; and great Sufferings- so that they may learn the Grace of God; and be the humble and broken men that God desires them to be. So, when they thunder the glorious and uncompromising Truth of God’s Word- they will bathe that Truth with great and pervasive Love.

Now a couple of weeks ago- I told you that of all the writers of the New Testament- in fact of all the writers in the entire Bible- John was the most “black and white”. He was the most Absolute. He was the one who speaks in absolute Certainties. So, there doesn't seem to be any “gray area” with John. I like to think that John is “black and white” without Exceptions while God raised up Paul to minister to the Exceptions. So, when you're reading the Books that John wrote- you need to periodically take a Break and read something that Paul wrote- so, you can find some breathing room- because *everything* with John is so “cut and dried”.

For example, as you read John’s Gospel Record- a person is either in the Light or he is in the Darkness. It's either Life or Death; the Kingdom of God or the kingdom of the devil. To the Apostle John- a person is either a child of God- or he is a child of satan- there is not any “grey area”- no “middle ground”.

It is from John’s writings that you find the Judgment of the Righteous and the Judgment of the Wicked; the Resurrection of Life or the Resurrection unto Damnation. To John, a person is either *receiving* Christ or he is *rejecting* Him; He is either bearing godly Fruit or he has no Fruit at all.

John is the one who talked about being “cut off and burned”; or “cut up and bearing Fruit” to the Glory of God. John said it's either Obedience or Disobedience; it's Loving or not Loving; it's Absolute all the way down the Line. John thought and wrote and lived his Life in very clear and simple Absolutes

For example- when you come into **1John**- you will find that this entire Epistle is all about ten separate Tests that the Apostle gives to every single person in the Christian Church. And we need to know that these ten Tests are NOT determining who is spiritual and who is not quite as spiritual as they should be. No, John is so rigid about this- and those ten Tests are to decide who is saved and who is only *deceived* into *thinking* they are saved.

In **1John**- the Apostle John says "*If you're a believer, then you're in the Light; and you're confessing your Sins; and you're walking the Way Jesus walked; and you're loving your brothers; and you're obeying the Commandments; and you're not loving the World; and you're not continuing in Sin; and you're ministering to your brother when you see him in need; and you're keeping the Commandments; and you're living Righteously; and you're Pure; and you're loving the Truth*", and if you are *not* doing those things on an ongoing Basis- then it's because you're not saved. Simple, right?

The Problem with speaking in ONLY Absolutes- is that our Lives are NOT lived in Absolutes. NONE of our Lives are lived in Absolutes. Our Lives- as human beings- are surrounded with and embedded with very important Nuances; and Exceptions; and Situations; that do NOT operate very well with Absolutes.

Number 1- we make Mistakes. And if, for some reason, any of you here this morning thinks or believes that you have risen above making Mistakes- please allow me to be the *first* one to inform you of this: YOU HAVEN'T! And I'm NOT just talking about Sin here. Simply as human beings- we don't always see things clearly or fully. And that limited Knowledge allows us to make Decisions based in faulty or incomplete Information. But Absolutes do NOT allow for this.

And so, people, who freely acknowledge they are Human and who are humble enough to know that they periodically make Mistakes- don't end up in a Good Place- if all they read or study or hear are Absolutes- especially *spiritual* Absolutes.

This is one Reason *why* many people, who are genuinely saved, have a Problem with *knowing* they are saved. Spiritual Absolutes make it *easier* for them to doubt their Salvation. The Reality that they still sin- makes it difficult for them to embrace their Salvation- precisely because they see the spiritual Absolutes and they ignore the Nuances and the Exceptions.

And this is *why* God the Holy Spirit did NOT allow John to write every Book of the New Testament. Look, we need Absolutes. But that's NOT all we need. And so, everything John wrote is True. Every single word is Inspired;

Inerrant; and Infallible. Yet there are 9 different men- each with different Personalities and writing styles- that God “moved on” to write the 27 Books of the New Covenant. And we should thank God for that.

So, you have to keep in mind as you read what John wrote that John was talking about an overall “Pattern of Life” and NOT individual Sins or individual Thoughts. And it helps to periodically balance out what John says and go to something that Paul wrote for a little Mercy and a little Balance.

And then you read **2John**- and there, John calls for a complete and total Separation from all that is False. And then you read **3John**- and in verse 11- John wrote this:

**Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.**

... just that “black and white”. If you do Good- then you're of God and if you do not do Good- then you don't even belong to God at all! So, does that mean if I “do Good” one time; or does it mean for me to NEVER do anything except Good? So, where, in this Statement, is there room for my Failures and my Sins? Well, there isn't- unless you realize that John is talking about the overall “Pattern of my Life” and NOT individual Failures or Sins.

So, that is John- that was his personality. He was just that “black and white”. He was an absolute and certain man; and he spoke the Truth *unwavering*- without *any* Exceptions.

So, John was a very interesting man. Many people call John- “the beloved Disciple” or even the “Apostle of Love”. And I really don't know why they say that because it was Paul not John- who wrote **1Corinthians 13** which is an entire Chapter on the Love of God.

And then others think that John was a very brutal and unmerciful man- *especially* when they read the clear Absolutes in which he wrote. But in Reality- God used John to achieve a very good Balance between Truth and Love- as good a Balance as any human being is able to have.

But even though John started out very Ambitious and very motivated to Self-glory- *you* never find, in any of his Writings, the slightest hint of Pride, or Self-aggrandizement, or Self-exaltation, or Ambition. And the best Insight into that- is when you read his Gospel Record- he never once uses his own name. Now he would have had every Reason to do so had he chosen- but he never does. And this is a Testimony of how much God had changed John.

So, did John refer to himself at all? Yes, but he always refers to himself only in reference to the Lord. Let me show you quickly from **John 13:23**- turn there with me- and this is very helpful in understanding John. **John 13:23**- there it says

that Jesus has just washed the Disciples' feet; and it's the night that Judas betrays Him; and Jesus is headed to the Cross. And the Disciples are there with Jesus. And in verse 21- Jesus said:

... **Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.**

... and the Disciples look at each other and they're trying to figure out who Jesus was talking about. And at this Point- they have no idea that it's Judas. Now read verses 23-31:

**23 There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.**

**24 So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking."**

**25 He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?"**

**26 Jesus then answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.**

**27 After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."**

**28 Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him.**

**29 For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor.**

**30 So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.**

**31 Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him;**

Now back then when they ate- they were all reclining. And John was so close to Jesus- it says, "He was reclining on Jesus' bosom." Who was reclining on Jesus? He was "**One of His disciples whom Jesus loved.**" And that is an insight into John.

John never gives his own name. He never speaks of himself in reference to himself. He speaks of himself only in reference with Jesus. He's *always* honoring Christ. Rather than say "*John*" which might bring some Attention to himself, he

says "the disciple whom Jesus loves," giving Glory to Jesus for having loved and saved such a wretched Sinner like himself.

Now according to **John 13:1** it says,

**Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.**

... so, we see that Jesus loved them all- but it seems to me that there was a *unique* way in which John took hold of Jesus' Love.

Now listen to what I say to you. Since John was going to be so critical in articulating the Truth- the Truth of the Deity of Jesus; the Truth about the life of Christ; the Truth of the Christian Experience; the Truth about the Life of the Church; and the Truth of the End Times- since John was so determined to *possess* and to *articulate* the Truth- it was *essential* that this Knowledge of Truth be balanced with unfading Love.

And so, Jesus took on John as a "special Project"- and Jesus taught John *how* to love. So, just how do you teach a man how to love? By loving him the way you want him to love. We learn to love by being loved; and we learn to be loved by knowing that we *need* to be loved. And so, by the time that John wrote those five Books- he had been gripped by God's Love and he was no longer the man whom Jesus had initially called.

Now many people want to know why the other men wrote their Books so early on and yet John waited almost 67 years after Jesus called him- to write his five Books. And one of the Reasons why would have been that it took John that long to achieve the Balance between Truth and Love that God wanted. And so, God *supernaturally* and *miraculously* kept John alive all those years- through all that Persecution and Suffering- until he arrived at this Balance- and then, God the Holy Spirit "moved" on John to pen down five inspired and infallible Books.

John was the last of the men who *physically* walked with Jesus Christ. All of the other Apostles had died the martyr's Death. John's brother, James had been killed by the edge of the sword very soon after Jesus' Resurrection as recorded in **The Acts 12:2**.

According to History, the Emperor, Nero had both Peter and Paul arrested; brought to Rome; and imprisoned. And it was in that City where Paul stood, as a Roman Citizen, before the Tribunal of the Emperor to defend himself- using the two Manuscripts, that Dr. Luke had compiled, as his Defense (the **Gospel of Luke** and **The Acts**). But, like his Lord, Paul's trial was a "kangaroo Court" that had *predetermined* his Guilt before he ever appeared. And so, after spending Time with Peter in Prison, Paul was taken out and beheaded; while Peter was beaten and then

was crucified upside down. But it took Peter four days to die- so, while he was on the upside down Cross- Peter preached to those who were nearby- to repent and serve the living God.

John the Baptist had long since been beheaded while the Apostle Bartholomew was flayed alive with knives. Paul's "Son in the Faith", Timothy, the 1<sup>st</sup> Pastor of the Church at Ephesus, was beaten to Death with clubs for denouncing a Mardi Gras type Parade. The 1<sup>st</sup> Deacon, Stephen, was stoned to Death. The Apostle, Matthew, the former tax-Collector, was probably stabbed in the back by a swordsman sent by King Hertacus of Ethiopia; then impaled by spears; and finally was eaten by cannibals. John Mark, Peter's scribe to the Gospel Record that bears his Name, was dragged through the streets of Alexandria, Egypt by a rope tied around his neck until he died. And Dr. Luke, the beloved Physician of the Apostle Paul, had died at 84 years of age in Thebes, Greece. So, all of John's contemporaries were dead. Only John was left.

But it wasn't the Fault of those who wanted him Dead- that John was still alive. They had tried their best to kill him- twice! According to History, John was arrested; thrown in jail; beaten; and then boiled in oil. But he simply wouldn't die- so, they banished him to a barren island called, "*Patmos*" to starve to Death.

And it was on that barren island, where he was sentenced to die, that God came down and visited John, and gave him the final Vision of the victorious Christ. And John wrote that Vision down in **The Book of the Revelation**. And in **Chapter 1:10** John says that rather than being discouraged and bitter about his Banishment he said,

**I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day ...**

...which tells us a little about John's Personality and his Faith in God.

It was in that same apocalyptic Book that John wrote down the Promise that God made to him- that he was, somehow, going to get off that island; and was going to preach the Gospel again to many people. Look at **The Revelation 10:11**:

**And they said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."**

... and John did get off that island and he did preach again.

And here at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century- this old man- the last living Apostle on earth; the last man who actually saw and touched and heard Jesus Christ; the last man who literally placed his head on Jesus' breast; and heard the heartbeat of the incarnate God- this man sat in a chair in the City of Ephesus; and dictated to his



Disciple, who was also named, “John”, his Gospel Account; three powerful Epistles; and the final Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Now during John’s Ministry- the Christian Church was facing serious Challenges both *externally*- with very hostile Persecution and *internally*- with many false Teachings and Heresies that had cropped up. You see, at this time- it was still illegal to be a Christian. And most believers were not safe anywhere they went. Christians were routinely hunted down; arrested; and had their goods and possessions confiscated from them by both Gentiles and Jews.

Now as I have told you before- one of the main Assignments that God had given the Apostles was to clearly articulate the New Covenant Teachings- in such a way- as to carefully explain what the Gospel and Salvation was. And by doing this- also teaching what it was not. This had a dual Purpose:

1. To allow the glorious Gospel to be taught and learned Rightly so that unworthy Sinners can be saved
2. To expose all false Teaching and warn Believers about the various Dangers of unbiblical Beliefs

... and false Teaching came in like a Flood.

Now as we have studied in this Church- even though there are thousands of individual Heresies out there today- there are really only seven major Roots of all the Apostasies and false Teachings that are in the world today. And there are really only two main Areas where all Heresies and all false Teachings attack the Truth. And to find out about this- please turn with me to read what Jude said about this in **Jude 3-4:**

**3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.**

**4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.**

Now all during the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century- the two main Groups of Heretics- the “Judaizers” (Legalists) and the “Antinomians” (Lawlessness)- were hard at work, trying to pervert the Right Way of the Lord.

The Judaizers taught the terrible and cruel Heresy of Legalism that said that in order to become a good Christian- all Gentile believers had to first become good Jews by Circumcision and keeping the dietary and ceremonial aspects of the Law of Moses.

Those false Teachers taught a “gospel” that *ignored* the Grace of God. And you will recall that Peter, James and Paul dealt with this Heresy by convening the very first “Church Council” to decide the Matter as recorded by Dr. Luke in **The Acts 15**. In addition, Paul completely *dismantled* the Heresy of the Judaizers as well as Legalism itself in his Masterpiece called, **Galatians**. .

The other major Heresy of the middle 1<sup>st</sup> Century- the Heresy called, “Antinomianism”- on the other hand, taught that good Works; godly Fruit; and humble Obedience *after* Salvation were completely Unimportant. And so, by their false Teaching- these Heretics were *abusing* the Grace of God.

The Apostle Paul had led the fight along with Peter and James against these Heretics and Jude had cried out to the Church to “Contend earnestly for the one true Christian Faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints.”

But now, in the last Days of John’s Life, a new strange Heresy was creeping into the Church. This new thing was called, “*Gnosticism*” and had many facets. One group of Gnostics denied the full Deity of Christ; while another group of Gnostics denied His full Humanity. Still another group of Gnostics taught that we need to blend or “synchronize” all pagan Beliefs and Celebrations with the Church’s Teaching; while still another Group of Gnostics taught that Jesus had secretly married Mary of Magdalena and had fathered a child.

At the time of John’s Writings of his five inspired Books- his Gospel account; his three Epistles that bear his name and his great Revelation of Jesus Christ- it was this new heresy of Gnosticism that was beating on the door of the Church trying to get in. And so, God used John to defeat Gnosticism through the five Books that he wrote. And he did this with a balance of both unwavering Truth and merciful Love.

And we know that at least in part- John had already begun to learn how to love because in chapter 19 of John’s Gospel and verse 26, they're standing at the foot of the Cross, John is there and the mother of Jesus, Mary, is there along with some other women. And verses 26&27 says,

**26 When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!"**  
**27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.**

So about two years after this Passage that we are studying in **Matthew 10-** two years of Training between the time that Jesus first called John and His Crucifixion- Jesus said from the Cross to His mother, "**Woman, behold, your son!**" and He was referring to John.

And this is Testimony that John had learned to love. Because, here, Jesus gave him the Care of His own Mother. Jesus told Peter, "*Feed My sheep!*" but He told John, "*Care for My mother!*" And there are records in Church History that indicate that John never stopped caring for Mary until she died. So, John had become a man of great Love because he was loved in a unique Way.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Chapter of John's Gospel- Mary Magdalene comes to the Tomb and came to Simon Peter and to the other Disciples whom Jesus loved. In 21 verse 7, "*That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved.*" Verse 20, "*Peter turning around saw the disciple whom Jesus loved.*"

So that's how John refers to himself. I think it was simply John getting the Message that was being delivered to him- "*John, it's great to hold the Truth. It's great to be Uncompromising and Unwavering and Narrow and Relentless and Intolerant of that which is Untrue. But, John, you need to balance that with Love!*"

I look at my own Life coming to the Lord at the ripe old age of 16 and I was just loaded to the gills with Truth- but I was real short on Patience. And so, I came blasting into the Church! And I see this with young men even today- they come blasting into the Church and dump a Load of Truth on everybody- expecting to get an immediate Response.

But God's Way is the Way of Patience; and Mercy; and Grace; and Forgiveness; and Tenderness; and Compassion- mixed in with that Truth. And that's where John was. It's great to find the Boldness. It's great to find the Thunder- but without Love- ALL we are is...

**... a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. (1Corinthians 13:1)**

So, I think John never got over the fact that Jesus loved him. I think John was flabbergasted that Jesus loved a man- who wanted to burn up the Samaritans; that He loved a man who sought Honor for himself in the Kingdom! So, when you look at the Life of John, you see these two things: Truth and Love.

The Truth comes through in everything he says. John's gospel Record is the very BEST Christology. It's the theology of Jesus Christ! It's consummate Divine Truth. And his Epistles are an Affirmation of the Theology of true Salvation. And his Book about the final Victory of Jesus (**the Revelation**), is the *ultimate* Christological Book. It's the Presentation of the eternal Glory of the Son of God!

So, John was the consummate Theologian. And his Theology focused *primarily* on Jesus Christ- in all His Glory; as fully God and fully Man; and as Redeemer and coming King! John had the Truth, but he also had Love.

John used the word "Love" over 80 times in his Writings! And that's *why* he's become known as the Apostle of Love. But John *learned* to love because the Lord loved him- and he got that Message. He learned to love the way the Lord loved him. And in his Writings, you can sum up his Theology. He taught that God is a God of Love; that God loved His own Son; that God loved the Disciples; and that, to some extent- God loves all men.

But John also taught that God is loved by Jesus; and that Jesus loved the Disciples; and that Jesus loves individuals. But he also taught that Jesus loves His Father; and that Jesus expects men to love Him; and that we should love one another! And John taught that Love *fulfills* the Law! So, Love was a *critical part* of John's Teaching. It's one of the *dominant* Themes. And John's Teaching on Love never slid into tolerant Sentimentality- masquerading as Love.

To the very End of his Life John was still a "*Son of Thunder*". To the very End of his Life- John lost none of his Intolerance for Lies. John *thundered* against errant Beliefs and false Teachings. He *thundered* against Lies and Deceptions. And he *thundered* against Sin and Immorality. So, yes! John was a "*Son of Thunder*" to the very End.

And this is a very important thing for us to know in our Day as we live in a Time of great Compromise; and a Time when ancient Heresies that the Church fought against; exposed; and defeated many Centuries ago- are making a huge Comeback due to all the soft and false Teaching that abounds.

We need to know that the Lord knew that the most powerful Advocate of Love would be a man who never compromised the Truth- otherwise his Love would take him down the road of Sentimentality and tolerance of Error- a road traveled by many, who claim Christ today. John had great Love- but there was never an Equivocation of the Truth.

So, it is not true to think that pure Love holds to no particular Truth. It is wrong to say that Tolerance is the greatest Virtue- because it isn't. Tolerance is easy; and requires no Strength or Conviction at all. It is easy to simply "go along to get along". It is easy to simply agree with everybody- even if what they say is blatantly contradictory with the Bible. That isn't Love or Courage, dear friends- it is Cowardice! The *greatest* Virtue is to maintain Divine Truth while blending that with Mercy.

And John also used the word "*witness*" 70 times! It's another *dominant* word John used because he was always the witness to the Truth. He referred to the Witness of John the Baptist; the Witness of Scripture; the Witness of the Father; the Witness of Jesus Christ; the Witness of the Miracles; the Witness of the Holy

Spirit; and the Witness of the Apostles. And all of this was *witnessing* or *testifying* to the Truth!

So, John was a lover of Truth as well as a Lover of God; and a Lover of Men. So, John didn't lean on Jesus' Chest because of some maudlin Affection or because he was Effeminate or Weak. No! He leaned on Jesus' Chest because he wanted to hear every word of Truth that came out of the Savior's Mouth; and because he wanted to enjoy the pure Love his Lord gave him; and because John wanted to be as close to Jesus as possible.

Many Tributes have been made to John's Teaching, as to its Truth and Love. And they are justified. In the first chapters of **The Acts**, John added his Love and his Proclamation of the Truth to Peter's in the *founding* of the Church.

And many, many years later, toward the End of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, when all the other Apostles were dead- John was still building Gentile churches on both Truth and Love. He was the fiery Lover of the Truth; as well as a Lover of God; and a Lover of souls. John *hated* what the Lord hated- but he also *loved* whom the Lord loved.

And after nearly seventy years of this- John had become the Patriarch of the Churches in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). And he was banished. **The Revelation 1:9** says, "For the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus!" John spoke the Truth in Love more than the Culture could bear. And so, they banished him to a small island five miles by ten miles called Patmos.

Now Patmos is in the Aegean Sea off the western Coast of Turkey. And John was on that rock in Exile because he wouldn't give up the Truth that he preached out of Love for God and Love for men. And around the year, 98 A.D., during the reign of Emperor Trajan- John died- Tradition says. And some Traditions say that John was most remembered because of a constant phrase on his lips, "*My little children, love one another.*" And those who knew him remembered him by greeting one another, "*My little children, love one another.*"

But the best Epitaph that I can give you about John is found in **2John**, where we see the Life of John in a microcosm. And there we see the things that concerned him- the hard to accomplish Balance between Truth and Love. So, look what John wrote in verses 4-12:

**4 I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father.**

**5 Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.**

**6 And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.**

**7 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.**

**8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.**

**9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.**

**10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;**

**11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.**

**12 Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full.**

... and the Summation of this Passage is that the Apostle says, *“I’m so glad you walk in the Truth. But you can’t walk in the Truth apart from Love. You’ve got to love God; and you’ve got to love Jesus Christ by obeying what they said. That’s really the ONLY Way to prove your Love- is through our struggling and faulty Obedience. And then you need to love one another- but don’t let that Love cause you to tolerate Error. Don’t turn godly Love into human Sentimentality.”* And that’s a Summary of John’s entire Life.

The Scottish Reformer, Daniel McLain(1801-1869) said this of the Apostle John,

"He died like a summers day, his heart expanding like the setting sun."

Now it is true that Life is NOT Good simply because Life is long or that Life is easy. Life is Good because Life is Deep and Wide and High and that God allows to you experience the full range of Life- the *Heights* of great Achievements and the *Lows* of horrible Disappointments and Sufferings. But through them all- our great Sovereign God either *caused* them or *allowed* them. And God used ALL those

Experiences to mold you into being like John- someone, who was able to find the Balance between Truth and Love.

Listen to me- no man or woman is rejected by Jesus because of what they are. They are ONLY rejected because of what they *refuse* to become. And that should greatly encourage us this morning. John didn't end the way he started. And so, yield yourself to God this morning; and surrender your Will to God; and trust that what God is doing in your Life- no matter how easy it may be; or how hard it may be- is Good. And then hope and trust that it will bring forth the Glory of God as well as the fullness of your Joy as well.

The fishermen of Galilee, Peter, Andrew, James and John, all stared out one way- but they all became "fishers of men" on a tremendous scale- gathering souls into the Church that God used them to establish.

And in one sense- those men are still casting their nets into the "Sea" of the World through the Testimony of Jesus through the Gospels and the Epistles. And they're still bringing multitudes of people to Jesus.

And so, we see that Jesus took very *common* men, made them into very *uncommon* Apostles. And whereas, God will NOT make us into Apostles- nevertheless, God desires to do a *similar* Work in our Lives. And so, we should pray that God will do that with us today!

Tradition holds that John died as an old man in the City of Ephesus near the End of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. And one Tradition is that, just before his Death, during one Service- the Pastor asked John if he had a Word for the Church. Are you kidding? Did John have a Word for the Church! All the things that John saw during his Life! All the things that John personally experienced! And all the things that John wrote down! Did he have a Word for the Church? You bet! And Tradition says the old Apostle, the only remaining "Son of Thunder", who walked with Jesus; saw Him die; spoke to Him after His Resurrection; and watched Him ascend into Heaven- struggled to his feet and said, "We must remember the Words of our Lord Jesus, Who said that we are to love one another!" And he sat back down and a little while later- John entered his eternal Reward as the Apostle, who had been gifted with the Ability to balance *uncompromising* Truth with *unquenchable* Love!

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your Pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.