

Title: Lock Your Doors, but Keep the Lights On  
Text: 2 John 7-8  
Theme: Helping one another not  
Series: 2 John  
Prop Stmtnt: The incredible impact of fellowship

People in our world are living with a heightened degree of angst. You see it in extended family, at work, in school board meetings, and in so much social commentary. Our social fabric is tearing because our families are tearing, our relationships at work are tense, we are tense. Beloved, we do not have to be like our world. In fact, we can and we must be different – better.

Earlier this year I read a new book on the heart of Christ for sinners and sufferers by Dane Ortland. It is called Gentle and Lowly and I thought it was so helpful. If someone asked you to describe yourself, you may describe yourself better than what you are, or worse. But, if Jesus described himself, we know that whatever he says, it would be accurate. Well, Jesus did. In Matthew 11 Jesus describes himself as being gentle and lowly in heart. As I read this I longed to know Christ more and to be more like him and I longed for us to be more gentle and lowly, that is to be more like Christ. Gentle and lowly is not only the opposite of our culture, it is the opposite of what many experience from other believers which contributes to the disengagement and tearing apart of lives. This morning, we have 200 copies of this book that are available to you for free. 1 per family with the promise that you will read it before the end of the year. I promise you that it will be good for your soul and it will be good for our church and our church will be good for the kingdom.

Read Text:

If you have a home, I would guess that many of you want it to be warm and inviting, but not to thieves. Therefore, you lock your doors, but at the same time, you keep the lights on. The same is true about our life together as a church. We want to be warm and inviting, but not to those who want to harm us and there are those who want to harm us. It is likely that the apostle John is in Ephesus and is writing this letter to another congregation. John is at the same time, encouraging and warning. He is so blessed by their love of the truth and their faithfulness to the gospel! He is also concerned for them. Watch out for deceivers. Watch out for false prophets. It is because you love and walk in the truth that you cannot give them a voice in your congregation because they will abuse your trust in order to turn you against the gospel and therefore against one another. Love without discernment is shallow sentimentalism that has no grit. Discernment without love is harsh and unattractive. Neither put Chris on display. 2<sup>nd</sup> John is an encouragement to love deep with discernment and wisdom.

#### I. **The sad and dangerous reality of deceivers** (7)

This warning is not new, is it? Both Jude and Peter warned about the dangers of false teachers when they wrote in the mid 60's. Now, likely about 25-30 years later, John is saying the same thing. Paul warned about false teachers in some of his writings and even sent Timothy and Titus

to specific settings in order to address those false teachers. Beloved, it is like this. If you have an apartment or a house, then you need to lock it. The sad reality is that there are people who, given the opportunity, will steal from you. They have no fear of God. They don't care. They don't love you and they live off of exploiting and taking advantage of vulnerable people.

#### **A. There are many deceivers. (7a)**

My 3-year-old grandson, Titus is a very trusting soul. He waves at people and thinks that every dog he sees wants to play with him. I love the fact that he is so free and happy in that regard. It is a necessary grief to teach him and all children about "stranger-danger." While there are many very kind and delightful people in this world, there are also people who are evil. Those of you who are expecting a child naturally find yourselves thinking about and anticipating the happy things. Picking names can be fun (and challenging), painting or decorating the nursery, getting furniture, clothes, getting a degree in mechanical engineering in order to know the proper use of car seats, wondering how tall he/she will be, what their personality is going to be like, there is a lot to look forward to. But, that is not the whole story. Being a parent is not a hobby or side-job. In fact, being a parent is not a job you do or career path you follow. It is more. It is your life. And you quickly discover that you are dealing with life and death matters. Yes, there are fun things, but this is an evil world and there are evil people, evil influences, terrible diseases, natural disasters, and multiple relational landmines that you are constantly having to navigate. This is hard.

The same thing is true about the church, in fact, I would say that it is true in an even more intense level. I thought that becoming a pastor would be similar to becoming a parent. If you feed your kids well, love them and provide for them, teach them and help them learn, grow and get along, well, then there will be a lot of joy and delight. And it is true, but what is also true is that this world is evil and there are evil people, evil influences and just as happy, trusting, and friendly 3-year-olds can be taken advantage of, so can a happy, trusting, friendly, and generous church be taken advantage of.

There are many deceivers and a good church is a prime target for abuse. We need to be aware of that. We are and should be generous people. We are and should be trusting people. We are and should be encouraging and welcoming. But, we need to be all of these things and wise and discerning. That is why...

#### **B. Clear confessional theology is essential. (7b)**

John has described this church (elect lady) as walking in truth, they know the truth, the truth abides in them and they are loving one another. It is beautiful, but the enemy is at the gates. The church is ground zero for God's plan on this earth. A happy and healthy church is an awesome weapon in the hand of God for the glory of God and the gospel of Jesus. God advances his kingdom (his rule and reign in the hearts of his people) through the advancement of the church. Therefore, the church is going to be targeted by the enemy. The church is on the front lines of the ultimate war. If we really knew what was going on in the battle around us our

ushers would not hand out bulletins, but body armor and seatbelts. The war is for the hearts of people and there is no negotiating between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of Christ. This is war. We are in a battle and that battle is over truth. John points out how important this is. Truth or theology is not a hobby or side job, it is absolutely essential in the life of a church. The way that the enemy seeks to destroy a church is by seeking to get us to not believe what the apostles believed.

Clear, confessional theology is essential. What are the deceivers teaching? They are not confessing (that is they are denying) the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh (his humanity) and/or they are not confessing (that is they are denying) the full deity of Christ. What John says here in v.7 is a summary of what he said earlier in his first epistle.

Look at 1 John 4.1-3. This text points out the two errors that have to be avoided. The first error is denying that Jesus was actually human and that he actually came in the flesh and the second error to avoid “does not confess Jesus” is the error of denying his deity. To confess Jesus is to believe and embrace him as he taught about himself. Christ claimed to be God in the flesh. To deny that, as the Mormons do, Jehovah Witnesses do, Christian Scientists do, is to deny Jesus. These cults believe in Jesus, but they have created their own belief about Jesus.

Do you see the situation? There are deceivers who are teaching bad theology and there are people who are influenced by those deceivers. Therefore, we need to be loving and discerning. How do we do that? We do that by having good and careful conversations with one another. What happens when a person joins our church? Today, we voted on new members and we said that they had met the qualifications of membership and were interviewed by the elders and/or the membership team. Based on that, you are led to believe – what? You are led to believe that these people know the gospel and they believe the gospel and are in agreement with the doctrine of our church and want to be considered to be brothers and sisters and partners in the gospel. In order to recommend them to you, the elders need to be confident in their understanding and commitment to the gospel.

Let’s say that we are talking with a person who wants to join the church and they say that they believe in Jesus. Is that it? Is that all that we should ask about? No, we need to find out exactly what they believe about Jesus. They may have an inadequate and incomplete view, or a wrong view. If that is the case, then they are not believing as God’s Word requires. So, even though at times it feels a little tedious to ask more specific questions and get clarification, it is actually a very loving and necessary thing to do. If a person does not believe correctly about Christ, then they are not a genuine believer. Wouldn’t they want to know that? And if we love them, wouldn’t we want to help them understand that? That is why clear, confessional theology is so very important. We do not want to make it difficult to be a member of the church. We want to keep the lights on, right? We want to be and should be warm and inviting. At the same time, we need to make certain that, as much as we can, that we all understand one another and make certain that our understanding of the gospel and core doctrines is the same as God’s Word. That takes time. Teaching good theology, discussing good theology, understanding theology

historically is hugely important for a church in order to help us protect one another from either intentional or unintentional deception, because...

**C. Wrong belief has enormous consequences. (7c)**

*Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist* – Wow! This text identifies a category of people who are the missionaries of Satan and they are on a mission. At the beginning of the verse, he speaks of deceivers in the plural and in this last phrase he uses it in the singular. The Bible has a lot to say about the antichrist who appears at the end of this present age, who is particularly effective at deceiving millions of people, who attacks and seeks to destroy the people of God. So, when John says, “such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist” it sounds like he is saying that, the deceivers (plural) are cooperating in the mission of the Deceiver.

Let’s say that you are a young adult and you are not sure what you want to do. Someone suggests that you join the military, after all, they give you clothes to wear, a place to stay, things to do, and a salary. Sure enough, you go to a recruiting center and they make it sound wonderful, so you sign up. Then comes bootcamp and your world gets rocked. Then you are assigned to a base where you prepare for deployment and before you know what has hit you, you are on a mission somewhere in the world where history is being made. The lives of your fellow soldiers depend on you carrying out your mission. This is no longer a little “thing to do” while you figure out what you want to do with your life. The same thing is true with the church. Following Christ is not something you dabble in or treat casually. This is life and death. Wrong belief has enormous and eternal consequences. But, there is no other way. Life does not have a neutral category. The stakes are high. Therefore, there is

**II. The need for discernment and genuine fellowship (8)**

**A. There is a lot at stake. (8b)**

I am going to start with the end of verse 8, where John makes it very clear that there is a lot at stake. If we do not guard the gospel we risk losing everything. What does this mean? “*so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward*”?

Is John saying that you could lose your salvation or is he saying that you could lose your rewards as a believer? Whenever we encounter passages like this, I think that we must remember two very important and related truths. 1) A genuine believer cannot be lost. He cannot lose his salvation. 2) A genuine believer will persevere. A genuine believer will keep on believing. A genuine believer will keep on believing because Christ will not let him go. The question is: how do you know if your faith is genuine? Are you persevering in the faith? Are you pressing on? Even in the face adversity, do you trust Christ? Adversity reveals where your faith resides. Adversity reveals the authenticity of your faith. Adversity is going to come your way.

It is like a couple who profess love for one another. That is sweet and wonderful, but if their relationship has never been through the fire of adversity, then we wonder how deep that

commitment and love really goes. It is really easy to confuse loving another person for loving what that other person does for me. Feeling in love is not the same as actually loving. But, if they love one another they are going to guard that love and protect it from bad influences that would make it convenient to be unfaithful when adversity comes. So, if you feel as if your wife does not appreciate you or respect you like you want her to and you express that to a sweet little hot thing at work, well, you are exposing your relationship to a terrible temptation that will make it very easy to run to, when adversity comes. If you love your wife, if you love your husband, guard your marriage and grow your marriage because adversity will come and you will need deep roots to weather the storms. And if you love your marriage, you will guard it.

The same thing is true about this warning. God uses this warning to admonish the believer to watch out and remain faithful. And the reason we are faithful is because God is faithful to us. We hear these warnings and we listen to them and take them to heart. If you fail to watch out, if you fail to take these warnings seriously, if you fail to be diligent to make your calling and election sure, and you are complacent, presumptive and negligent about the gospel, then you may not be a believer.

Now, here is what happens when this topic comes up. Those who are genuine believers, are sensitive to this and can become very concerned and even fearful. There is a surge of adrenaline from the fear as they wonder perhaps they are not a believer. It is because you are concerned about the faith that is evidence that you are a believer. It is those who hear this and don't care, that are the ones who need to take the warning to heart. And in this case, the warning is to watch out, not simply for yourself, but watch out for the body, the local church because false teachers can have a devastating effect upon

#### **B. We must look out for each other. (8a)**

False teachers and false teaching is all around us. False teachers are seen in people who once professed the faith and then walked away. Their walking away is discouraging and it has a very disheartening effect on others. Theologically, we have this category for false teachers and false professors of faith. We know that if a person walks away from the faith and does not continue with Christ that, they were not ever regenerated in the first place. We know that factually. But, when that happens personally, it is hard. But, it is going to happen. It happens. The longer you follow the Lord, the more you will witness. That is why I often describe our commitment as church members as helping each other get home safe or get home before its dark. We look out best for one another by knowing each other, spending time with one, caring for one another, praying for one another and encouraging one another. Watching out for one another is how we reflect Christ. Be encouraged by the fact that Christ will not let you go. Then fulfill a major part of our reason for gathering and make certain that you encourage at least one or two people to keep following Christ.

- Who do I watch out for?
- How do I do that?
- What are some ways I can do that? What are some questions I can ask?

- When will I do that?