

II John - Setting a Watch

To Read:

1. I Timothy 3
2. Colossians 2

I. Introduction

A. Question 1: Who wrote II John?

1. Since II John is written as a letter, unlike I John, the writer identifies himself at the beginning of the letter - just as Paul introduces himself at the beginning of each of his letters
2. So II John 1 says - *The elder to the elect lady and her children*
3. Unfortunately, the identification the writer gives is not unique, unlike Paul, he didn't give his name, only a title
4. Historically, the book has been uniformly attributed to John
 - a. There are a surprising number of disagreements about the authorship, but I think there is very good reason to believe that the Apostle John was the writer of II John
 - b. For one, the language and the content of II John is very similar to the Gospel of John and I John
 - c. In fact, II John is probably very closely related to I John either as a cover letter or a follow up letter
5. So, why does the Apostle John identify himself as the elder, instead of as John or as the Apostle
 - a. First, as we look at Scripture, it was not unheard of for the Apostles to take the title and status of elder in a local church, for example, in I Peter 5:1, Peter says - *So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed*
 - b. The apostles believed in the local church, their goal was to plant local churches and they participated in the local church as leaders, Paul in Antioch, Ephesus and Rome, Peter in Rome or Babylon, John in Ephesus
 - c. So, why does John choose this title as opposed to an apostolic title?
 - i. Unlike I John which was circulated to multiple churches, II John is addressed to a local church
 - ii. So, John may be taking the title of elder because he is writing to a church, he is writing as a church authority to those in a church in a similar way to how Peter writes to the elders as a fellow elder
 - iii. John takes a title that effects camaraderie rather than command, he writes as someone who participates in a local church, who knows a local church, who loves a local church

B. Question 2: Who received II John?

1. Again, since II John is a letter, the recipient is listed - *The elder to the elect lady and her children*
 - a. But, also again, the identification is not very unique - who is the elect lady, what woman is John writing to?
 - b. There is a surprising amount of disagreement about this as well, and I don't want to go into all of that this morning but I do want to be honest that some people strongly disagree with my understanding
 - c. As I just said, I believe that when John address the elect lady, John is addressing a local church
2. Why do I think that the elect lady is a local church body?
 - a. Throughout the New Testament, the church is pictured as the bride of Christ
 - i. John does this, for example, in Revelation 19:7-8 - *Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"---for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints*
 - ii. Paul uses more straightforward language in Ephesians 5:30-31 - *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."* This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.
 - iii. The church is the bride of Christ - if Christ is Lord, *kyrios*, then the church is His chosen lady, *kyria*
 - b. But, John isn't writing simply to the universal church, because in the book he mentions other elect ladies
 - i. In verse 13, John says - *The children of your elect sister greet you.*
 - ii. There is one bride, but on earth, Christ's bride is present in many manifestations, local churches
 - iii. So John is present in one church, her elect sister, as an elder and he is writing to another church, the elect lady, John is writing to a specific manifestation of the bride of Christ in a local church
 - c. In the end, this interpretation helps make sense of the whole book
 - i. There are many things in the book that don't make sense unless the book was not written to an individual lady, but rather to a group of people like a church
 - ii. For example, the book is written in second person plural - 'you all do this' - not to and individual
 - iii. The commands of the book belong to the church - we should love one another
 - iv. And the content of the book belongs to the church - which teachers should the church allow?

C. Question 3: What is the purpose of II John?

1. As I mentioned above, II John is probably closely related to I John, it shares many of the same topics and themes
 - a. In fact, it may have been a cover letter for I John, a personal introduction to a general letter
 - b. Or it may have been a follow up letter, a personal exhortation based on the previous general letter
 - c. So, there are many of the same topics in II John as in I John, and I'm not going to redevelop each of those topics this morning - themes like the unity love and obedience, themes like who is Jesus
2. So, I would say that the purpose of II John is to clarify and expound on I John
 - a. John is going to take the themes that he taught on at length in I John and develop them in a slightly different direction in II John so that II John complements the teaching of I John
 - b. In a way, John is developing a specific application of the themes of I John
 - c. Specifically, how does a local church apply I John - how should a local church react to John's teaching?
 - d. In I John, John warned against false gnostic teachers who were denying core truths about Christ and called the believers to continue abiding in Christ in love, in obedience and in joy
 - e. John developed one application in I John - in the face of false teachers who are splitting the church, true believers in a local church should love one another as Christ loved us and demonstrate that we are true
 - f. But, what should a local church do about the false teachers - does the church ignore the false teachers, does it welcome the false teachers, does it hope they go away? What should a church do?
 - g. John is going to answer this question in II John

D. II John

¹The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, ²because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever: ³Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love.

⁴I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father. ⁵And now I ask you, dear lady---not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning---that we love one another. ⁶And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it. ⁷For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. ⁸Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward. ⁹Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, ¹¹for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

¹²Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete. ¹³The children of your elect sister greet you.

E. Proposition and Outline:

1. Proposition: The truth is of preeminent importance, and since there are many false teachers a watch must be set in the local church to guard and to display the truth about Jesus well.
2. Outline:
 - a. The truth is of preeminent importance
 - b. The truth is often maligned and misrepresented
 - c. The truth must be well guarded
 - d. Application

II. Exposition - Studying II John

A. The preeminent importance of truth

II John 1-6 - *¹The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, ²because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever: ³Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love. ⁴I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father. ⁵And now I ask you, dear lady---not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning---that we love one another. ⁶And this is love, that we walk according to his commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.*

1. John makes the theme of his letter clear in the first few verse - John is going to talk about truth
 - a. John uses the word truth five times in the first four verses of II John - *The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in **truth**, and not only I, but also all who know the **truth**, because of the **truth** that abides in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in **truth** and love. I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the **truth**, just as we were commanded by the Father.*
 - b. The repetition of this word tells us what John wants to talk about - the truth is really important to John,
 - c. Specifically the truth about who Jesus is is important to John, so later, in verse 7, John says - *For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh.*
 - d. John wants to makes sure that the church knows the truth well, because John wants to make sure that the church knows Jesus Christ well - if we don't know the truth about Jesus Christ we can't know Jesus Christ
2. Because the theme, truth, relates to I John, John connects this theme to his previous teaching
 - a. If you recall four weeks ago, we looked at the start of I John 5, and we saw John relate the central themes of his letter to each other - that faith and love, love and obedience and obedience and joy are united
 - b. Now John is going to connect these three themes to truth and show that each of these, love, obedience and joy, must be rooted in truth - and especially love must be rooted in truth
3. John starts with truth and love
 - a. In his introduction, John stresses the unity of truth and love twice
 - i. Verse 1 - *The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I **love in truth***
 - ii. Again, in verse 3 - *Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in **truth and love**.*
 - iii. John understands that true love must be based in truth - the truth about who Jesus is and what He has done fuels true love so true love imitates the truth of Jesus and speaks in truth to one another
 - b. This theme is found throughout the New Testament
 - i. Paul says in Ephesians 4:15 that truth must be spoken in love and love will speak the truth - *Instead, **speaking the truth in love**, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*
 - ii. And he says that love must be based in truth, even rejoice in truth in I Corinthians 13:6 - *[love] does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the **truth**.*
 - iii. In Christ, truth and love are united and inseparable, love doesn't happen without truth, truth can't be understood or affirmed apart from love
 - c. So, truth is important because without truth there cannot be true love
 - i. This isn't the main point of II John, but it does address a pertinent issue to the church today
 - ii. In our culture and increasingly in our church, love means accepting and even celebrating someone's own personal truth - whatever a person wants to believe and to be is a good thing
 - iii. While love does mean accepting a person for how they are, it also requires speaking the truth to a person - we must speak the truth in love, love must not rejoice in evil, but it rejoices in the truth
 - iv. Any so-called 'love' that overlooks or denies the truth is not loving - it is not loving to see a person enmired in sin and ignore that sin, just as it is not loving to see someone drowning and to ignore it
 - v. Truth and love are united - we cannot truly love a person without speaking the truth, and when speaking the truth we must do it in real, heartfelt, visible love - truth is the basis of love
4. John relates truth to obedience as well, Verse 5 - *I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.*
 - a. Walking in the truth, that is living based on the truth about Jesus and in harmony with the truth about Jesus, is obeying the commandment of God - truth is the basis of obedience as well
 - b. This teaches us something important about obedience as well - obedience isn't merely following a list of rules, obedience is living in a way that matches the truth of Jesus, it is living in light of who Jesus is
 - c. So, obedience cannot happen outside of the truth - we can't live according to the truth of Jesus if we don't know and agree with the truth - any other obedience is a false obedience, an attempt at self-righteousness
5. And John relates truth to joy, Verse 5 - *I rejoiced greatly to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.*
 - a. John wants to have joy in Jesus and John wants us to have joy in Jesus as well - we saw that in I John, so in II John, John is rejoicing that the truth about Jesus is bearing fruit in the lives of believers in other churches
 - b. The truth has become the basis of John's joy as well - without truth there cannot be true joy
 - c. Which brings us back to I Corinthians 13:6 - *[love] does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.*
 - d. Love doesn't only agree with the truth and speak the truth, love rejoices in the truth

B. The truth is often maligned and misrepresented

II John 7 - *For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.*

1. Because the truth is so important to John, John wants everyone to know and to obey the truth
 - a. But, unfortunately, many do not confess the truth - and to be clear, John is not talking about general unbelievers, John is talking about those who claim to be Christian
 - b. John says that many Christians do not believe the truth - they don't really hold on to who Jesus is, they don't accept Him for who He says He is and they don't live that out in their lives
2. This is a serious and continuing problem for the church, in fact, it will keep getting worse as time goes on
 - a. Paul warns Timothy in II Timothy 3:12-13 - *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*
 - b. And again in II Timothy 4:3-4 - *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*
 - c. Paul warns Titus in Titus 1:10-11 - *For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.*
 - d. Many false teachers have gone out into the world to deceive the church and to distract the world from the truth about Jesus and those who are not firmly rooted in Christ will run to such teachers
3. This is because false teachers can appear on the surface to be believers and can have appealing messages
 - a. Romans 16:18 - *For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive.*
 - b. Colossians 2:8,23 - *See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.... These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.*
4. But, at the core, false teachers do not love the truth, they distort and they twist the truth to deny something about Jesus, false teachers are aligned not with Christ but with the spirit of the antichrist
 - a. II Thessalonians 2:9-10 - *The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.*
5. False teachers always fail to see Jesus for who He truly is and they fail to hold Jesus up as who He truly is - they will make Him less than He really is somehow, and they will do it in ways that appeal to our flesh and will make us want to believe them
6. If the truth is so important to the church, then false teachers are a real problem - the false teachers will confuse the world on what the message of Jesus is, the false teachers will confuse the church on what the message of Jesus is, the false teachers will draw away naïve believers and will keep unbelievers from hearing the truth
7. John emphasizes the importance of truth because there are **many** deceivers in the world, we must know the truth because many will try to convince us otherwise

C. We must guard the truth

II John 1:8-11 - ⁸*Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.*

⁹*Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, ¹¹for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.*

1. In verse 8, John comes to the main exhortation of II John
 - a. If the truth is so important and if there is such a large danger to the truth, the truth must be guarded
 - b. John tells us that we must set a watch - *Watch yourselves*
 - c. And John tells us what we are to be guarding when we set the watch - we guard the truth - *everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.*
 - d. John tells us that the church must set a watch to guard the truth, the truth is important, but if we don't watch the truth can be lost, it can be diluted and distracted from by false teachers until it is completely lost
 - e. And John defines two watches that must be set
2. First, we must set an internal watch - the church must guard itself from falling away from the truth
 - a. Verse 8 - *Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.*
 - b. The verb 'watch' is a second person plural verb indicating that we are to be watching over each other to make sure that we don't lose the truth inside the church - we need to watch each other, to set a guard over each other for the truth
 - c. It is the same concept that Paul teaches in Colossians 3:16 - *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom - we teach and admonish or correct each other to make sure that we are all abiding in the truth of Christ - we set an internal watch to guard the truth*
 - d. Or what the author of Hebrews exhorts in Hebrews 12:15 - *See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;*
 - e. Or a few verses early in Hebrews 10:24-25 - *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*
 - f. If we don't set this watch, we may very well lose the truth, we may slowly and subtly forget the truth about Jesus Christ and we may lose our grasp of Christ and thereby lose our reward in Christ
 - g. We need to be watching, to be admonishing, to be encouraging and exhorting, to be stirring each other up in the truth so that no one fails to obtain the grace of Christ and so the truth is not lost
3. Second, we must set an external watch - the church must guard itself from receiving or promoting false teachers
 - a. Verse 10-11 - *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.*
 - b. John says that we don't only need to guard each other in the local church, the local church needs to guard who they welcome in or promote as a teacher of the church
 - c. If someone does not know and confess the truth about Jesus, John warns us not to do two things: don't receive him into your house or give him any greeting
 - d. Remember that John is writing to a church under the picture of an elect lady, so receiving a teacher into their house would be welcoming that teacher to come and join their church, to be a part of their fellowship
 - e. John warns the local church not to welcome false teachers into their fellowship to be a part of their church
 - f. But, not only does he warn against allowing them to come into the church, he gives a sterner warning - don't even give them a greeting - which may signify promoting or welcoming a false teacher without necessarily enveloping them into the local church
 - g. The church must be very careful to define who is in the church and who the church should listen to because false teachers must be kept out - they don't know the truth, they aren't part of the truth and they don't teach the truth - they will deceive those who are naïve in the faith
4. So John exhorts the church to set a watch, even, as it were, to create a fortress to guard the truth
 - a. A commander establishes a fortress in order to guard something, whether it be a strategic location or a strategic resource or a population center, a commander will build a fortress to protect something
 - b. And then a commander is going to assign soldiers to a fortress - those soldiers will be tasked with setting a watch and keeping watch to make sure that the fortress is guarded well
 - c. The soldiers will need to encourage and sustain each other as they man the fortress and fight off the enemy
 - d. And the soldiers will need to be very careful who they let in, they must man the walls to keep the enemy out
 - e. Just like an earthly commander, our commander, Jesus Christ, has set up a fortress for the truth - the local church, and has appointed soldiers to guard those fortress - believers in a local church
 - f. So, those in a local church must encourage and sustain each other as we man the fortress of the truth
 - g. And we must guard the walls to keep the enemy out, those who want to destroy the truth
 - h. And, in doing so, we will make sure that the truth is preserved so that everyone can see who Jesus Christ is - we guard the truth so that we can testify to each other and to the world the truth about Jesus clearly

III. Application - Setting a Watch

A. For our final point this morning, I want to ask, how do we practically obey the exhortation of this book?

1. And as I've meditated on this book, although there are many applications that we could make, I think there is one overarching application that this book calls for - the practice of church membership
 - a. Sometimes as we look the Scripture, we might question whether church membership is really necessary - the words are not mentioned in the New Testament as such and there is no formula for how we should practice church membership, so sometimes we might think that church membership isn't really necessary
 - b. But I think II John teaches us why we need church membership - maybe it doesn't use those words, but it teaches those concepts - II John says we need to carefully guard each other and guard who is in the church so that we can guard the truth and testify to Christ well - we need to set a watch
 - c. Throughout the New Testament, watching is a corporate activity, a joint task given to the local church
 - i. Notice how the internal watch, watching over each other, is continually commanded of the church
 - ii. Paul says in II Corinthians 13:1,5 (sometimes we take verse 5 out of context and talk about personal watching, which is good, but we see in context that this is about corporate watching) - *This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses... **Examine yourselves**, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?---unless indeed you fail to meet the test!*
 - iii. Paul also talks about the corporate nature of watching in Galatians 6:1-2 - *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. **Keep watch** on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*
 - d. When the command to watch isn't given to a whole local church, then it is given to elders within a local body
 - i. Not only is an internal watch commanded, and external watch is also commanded in the local church
 - ii. Elders are to watch themselves and the teaching - I Timothy 4:16 - *Keep a **close watch** on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*
 - iii. Elders are to watch over the flock to protect against false teachers - Acts 20:28-30 - ***Pay careful attention** to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.*
 - iv. And elders are to watch as those who will give an account Hebrews 13:17 - *Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are **keeping watch** over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.*
 - e. So, the church needs a way to set a watch and to guard the truth - we need to set a watch that involves individuals in the church watching each other and elders as watch commanders guarding the fortress
 - f. This is what church membership is about - church membership, when practiced well, is carefully defining who knows the truth and who can represent the truth about Jesus both inside and outside the church
 - g. Church membership, when practiced well, is a covenantal relationship with each other where we encourage and stir up and guard and exhort one another in love to make sure we don't lose the truth about Christ
 - h. So, in applying II John, we see that the concepts of church membership are important to a local church - we need some way to define who is part of the church and represents Jesus Christ and who is not, we need a way to set a watch over the church to keep truth in and to keep falsehood out
 - i. And, I think II John teaches us three things about church membership: purpose, practice and plurality
2. The Purpose of Church Membership - Guarding the Truth
 - a. John has taught us that truth is of preeminent importance, but is in danger, and so must be guarded
 - b. And John exhorts the church not to receive false teachers into their house or even to give them a greeting
 - c. So, unless we want to literally wall off the church, we need to have a way of clearly describing who is part of our church and who is not part of our church, we need to guard who represents the truth
 - d. Church membership helps us to guard the truth as John exhorts us, because it declares who is able to represent the truth about Jesus Christ. As Jonathon Leeman says - *A church member, therefore, is someone who is formally recognized as a Christian and a part of Christ's universal body. That's not to say that churches always get it right, but it's their job to identify and affirm who belongs to the kingdom and who does not... Membership is the church's affirmation that you are a citizen of Christ's kingdom and therefore a card-carrying Jesus Representative before the nations.*
 - e. We need some form of church membership to describe who is in the truth and knows the truth about Christ

3. The Practice of Church Membership - Loving One Another
 - a. It is no accident that II John, the book about guarding the truth, is also strongly focused on love - if we are to set a watch, especially an internal watch, it has to be done by loving one another earnestly and truly
 - b. This is because church membership is an activity, not a status - when we talk about guarding the truth and defining who is inside the church and who is not, we might be drawn into the opposite thinking - that church membership is merely a status, I have joined a church, I have my membership
 - c. But it is really the opposite - in joining a local church we become part of the watch - John tells us in verse 8 'watch yourselves,' a continuing activity and he tells us how to do that in another command in verse 5 'that we love one another' - membership in a local church means taking the responsibility to love each other well
 - d. We love each other by speaking the truth in love, by bearing each other's burdens, by encouraging one another, by stirring one another up to love and good works - activities that constitute watching each other
 - e. We have tried to describe these acts of love in the membership covenant that our church uses, but I think one statement catches the purpose - *I will watch over the other members in love as they watch over me.*
 - f. Church membership is not merely a declaration, it is an action - watching each other in love
 - g. I think that our picture of a fortress actually helps us here - by joining a church we are staffing a fortress, and as fellow soldiers guarding the truth, we need to have camaraderie with each other, we need to be 'brothers in arms' having care and concern for each member of our unit as we protect the truth about Jesus Christ

4. The Plurality of Church Membership - Greeting Those from Other Local Churches
 - a. Now, having talked about the importance of church membership, especially the importance of guarding the church and not receiving false teachers, we could take this out of proportion and become too zealous in it
 - b. We could become overly cautious, scared of the possibility of false teachers or outsiders coming into our midst, we might become insular, zealously guarding our local body and distrusting and disregarding those outside - but I don't think this is what John wants us to do in reaction to his command
 - c. I'm not going to discuss at length, because this is really a plug for next week's sermon on III John - how do we fellowship with those in other churches? - but we can make a few observations from II John as well
 - d. As we look at II John, we see that there are two times that John mentions greeting, verse 10,11 - *or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.* - and in verse 13 - *the children of your elect sister greet you.* - a negative 'don't give a greeting' and a positive greeting
 - e. John tells us to guard the local church, but he presupposes that local churches will have loving interactions with each other - the local church that John is a part of is sending greetings to the recipient church
 - f. So, we need to be careful who we greet, we need to have discernment about what 'churches' we acknowledge as being true churches, but church membership and guarding a local church should not lead to isolation and disconnectedness from other local churches
 - g. Just because a local church is a fortress guarding the truth does not mean that our king does not have other fortresses in other places, some nearby and some far away, and we are fellow soldiers with those in these fortresses as well

B. Three Specific Exhortations to Three Sets of People

1. Exhortation 1: To current church members - watch one another in love
 - a. As we meditate on the truths from II John, this is what I want to leave you with - church membership is important so we should be living out our membership in this local church by loving each other well
 - b. Our interaction with each other should be intentional for the purpose of spurring each other on in the gospel in order to watch each other - so take your membership covenant seriously, try hard to live out what you have covenanted with us to do
 - c. Seek to have intentional and honest fellowship with each other so you can love and know each other well
 - d. Seek to purposefully guide your conversations with each other to encourage one another in Christ
 - e. We should be asking each other questions like: how has the gospel affected you this week? How has the gospel caused you to live differently this week? How have you struggled to live in the gospel this week? How can I encourage you in the gospel right now?
 - f. In fact, I would love to see our church develop to where we are loving asking and honestly answering these questions so much that we don't have time for other, lesser discussion
 - g. We need to be seeking real, close fellowship with each other and being part of real spiritual conversations with each other because we need to love each other and to watch each other - we can't love and watch each other if we don't know each other well
 - h. So, my exhortation to you is to take this seriously - watch one another in love

2. Exhortation 2: To Christians who are not members of a local church - join a local church
 - a. Now, I know that there are seasons of time when a true Christian may not be a member of a local church, because of transition or a move or other factors that occur from time to time
 - b. But, this should not be the habitual or continuing state of a Christian - going back to our illustration of a guarded fortress - a Christian who refuses to join a local church is like a soldier who refuses to join a unit - a soldier that claims that he is a member of the army and therefore does not need to join a squad or a platoon
 - c. As some of our Army veterans in here this morning could tell you, that does not make a good soldier - a good soldier is one who is a member of a specific unit, who dedicates himself to that unit, who cares for and protects the other members of that unit - being a member of a unit doesn't detract from being a member of the army, being a member of a unit is how a soldier is a member of the army
 - d. John wants Christians to join together in local churches for the purpose of displaying and guarding the truth, for the purpose of loving and watching one another so that the truth of Jesus will be clearly preserved
 - e. So, if you are not a member of a local church, I would exhort you to seek to find a church that you can join, a church that you can be part of the watch, a church where you can wholeheartedly love one another

3. Exhortation 3: To those who are not Christians, who are not in Christ - come learn about Jesus with us
 - a. This morning I have talked about the need of clearly defining who is in the church and who is not, to clearly define what the truth is about Jesus and to keep those who don't teach that truth out
 - b. And maybe this morning you are feeling a little isolated, feeling like you don't belong - and that is true, the church is a community of people who know and love Jesus Christ and only those who truly know and love Jesus Christ can be a part of our community
 - c. But, we guard the truth and carefully define our community not because we want to keep you out, but because we want to keep the truth in, we want to make sure that everyone can clearly see who Jesus is
 - d. So, if you aren't a believer in Jesus Christ this morning, if you aren't a Christian, we want to welcome you into our midst, we want you to know Jesus and to love Jesus, we would love for you to be part of our community
 - e. If you don't know Jesus this morning, if you don't know the truth about Jesus, then come ask one of us here this morning, we would all love to talk about Jesus with you and help you come to know Him
 - f. We guard our church not because we want to keep you out, but because we want you to know Jesus, we want you to know what it means that Jesus died in your place, we want you to know what it means that Jesus rose again to life for you, we want you to know what it means that Jesus is your king, we want you to come and be a part of this community, the community that follows Jesus the king
 - g. So, yes, if you are not a Christian, you are on the outside this morning, but we love you and we want you to be on the inside, so my exhortation to you is, come and learn about Jesus Christ with us