

“Shares in his evil works”: A Study on 2 John 11

Mr. Jones receives a knock on his door. As he opens the door, he sees that it is Mr. Smith, the local Arminian pastor. Mr. Jones is an elder at the local Reformed church and has had conversations with Mr. Smith in the past. Some of these conversations have centered around soteriology. Mr. Smith has stated more than once that he believes and preaches that Christ died for all people without exception. “Greetings, brother!” Mr. Jones says, “Come on in and have a cup of coffee!” Over coffee, the conversation again turns to soteriology, and again Mr. Smith states that he believes and preaches that Christ died for all people without exception. “Well, even though we disagree on some of the finer points of theology,” says Mr. Jones, “we can still rejoice in the Lord together.”

The Bible says something about both Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones. Of Mr. Smith, it says that anyone who does not believe the gospel is lost (Mark 16:16), that those who are ignorant of the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel are lost (Rom. 10:3), that those who preach another gospel are accursed (Gal. 1:8-9), and those who do not abide in the doctrine of Christ do not have God (2 John 9). Mr. Smith obviously believes and teaches a false gospel of salvation conditioned on the sinner, in opposition to the true gospel of salvation conditioned solely on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ. Any believer will easily recognize this.

But what does it say of Mr. Jones? Does the Bible have anything to say about the spiritual state of the Mr. Joneses of the world? It certainly does. And one of the most powerful passages is 2 John 11. The following is a study of this verse.

“he For speaking to him a greeting shares in the works of him evil.” [The Interlinear Bible]

“For the [one] speaking a greeting shares in his evil works.” [Literal Version]

Few people realize the true weight of this verse. Two verses previous, the Holy Spirit through John says that the one who transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He then gives a commandment in verse 10: If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house and do not give him a greeting. Note that John assumes that true Christians will be able to judge those who bring a false gospel. Then come the grave words of verse 11: Anyone who gives a greeting to one who brings a false gospel shares in the evil works of the one who brought the false gospel. The NASB translates this verse: *“for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.”* [The KJV commits serious error by using the colloquialism *“biddeth him God speed”* (similar to the KJV’s serious error in using the colloquialism *“God forbid”* in numerous passages, using God’s name where it is not in the original) and then translates the rest of the sentence, *“is partaker of his evil deeds.”* The NKJV has a much more accurate rendering: *“for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.”*]

What does it mean by *“speaking a greeting”* or *“gives him a greeting”* or *“greets him”*? Does it mean saying “hello” to such a person? No — this is a specific kind of greeting. The Greek word translated *“greeting”* is usually translated *“rejoice.”* Notice the intimate meaning of “rejoice” in the following examples: *“And the one reaping receives reward, and gathers fruit to everlasting life, so that both the [one] sowing and the [one] reaping REJOICE together”* (John 4:36). *“For your obedience reached to all; therefore, I REJOICE over you”* (Rom. 16:19). *“But if indeed I am poured out on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I REJOICE; yea, I REJOICE with you all. And you also REJOICE [in] the same and REJOICE with me”* (Phil. 2:17-18). *“REJOICE in [the] Lord always. Again I say, REJOICE”* (Phil. 4:4). In other passages, it is translated *“greeting”* as part of a

salutation (e.g., Acts 15:23, James 1:1).

"Giving a greeting," then, is obviously talking about speaking peace to that person -- calling that person a brother in Christ. In verse 9, he gives a description of that person -- one who "*does not abide in the doctrine of Christ,*" which is talking about the gospel. John is saying that one who speaks peace to someone who does not abide in the gospel "*participates in his evil deeds.*" Of what evil deeds is John speaking? It is the evil of not abiding in the gospel -- the evil of abiding in a false gospel. Verse 9 says that the one who performs these evil deeds (who does not abide in the gospel) "*does not have God.*" One who "*does not have God*" is lost (Eph. 2:12).

What about the spiritual state of one who participates in the evil deeds of that hater of God? What does it mean to "*participate in*" or "*to share in*" or "*to be a partaker of*" these deeds? The Greek word used here is *koinonei*, which means "to share in." I'm sure that many of you recognize the root; *koinos* means "common" or "communal," *koinonia* means "partnership" or "fellowship," and *koinonos* means "partner" or "sharer." The following are some Scriptural examples that will give you an idea of the intimate nature of "sharing" in 2 John 11:

"God [is] faithful, through whom you were called into [the] FELLOWSHIP of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9). *"Since, then, the children HAVE PARTAKEN in flesh and blood ..."* (Heb. 2:14a). *"but according as you SHARE the sufferings of Christ ..."* (1 Pet. 4:13a). *"to Titus, a true child according to [our] COMMON faith"* (Titus 1:4a). *"The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a PARTAKING of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a PARTAKING of the body of Christ?"* (1 Cor. 10:16). *"Having made all diligence to write to you about the COMMON salvation ..."* (Jude 3a). *"Over your FELLOWSHIP in the gospel ..."* (Phil. 1:5a). *"... if any FELLOWSHIP of [the] spirit ..."* (Phil. 2:1b). *"... and the FELLOWSHIP of His sufferings ..."* (Phil. 3:10b). *"... that you also may have FELLOWSHIP with us. And truly our FELLOWSHIP [is] with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ"* (1 John 1:3b). *"And you say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been PARTAKERS with them in the blood of the prophets"* (Matt. 23:30). *"and our hope for you [is] certain, knowing that even as you are SHARERS of the sufferings, so also of the comfort"* (2 Cor. 1:7). *"Indeed being exposed both to reproaches and to afflictions; and having become PARTNERS of those so living"* (Heb. 10:33). *"... and [being] SHARER of the glory about to be revealed."* (1 Pet. 5:1b). *"... so that through these you might be PARTAKERS of [the] divine nature ..."* (2 Pet. 1:4b).

Now go back to 2 John 11. He who speaks peace to one who abides in a false gospel is a SHARER, PARTICIPANT, PARTAKER, PARTNER in the evil deeds -- in the FALSE GOSPEL -- of the one who abides in a false gospel. He is sharing in the wickedness of the one who does not have God. The word "*koinonia*" is also used in 2 Corinthians 6:14b: *"And what FELLOWSHIP does light [have] with darkness?"* The answer to this rhetorical question is obviously "NONE WHATSOEVER."

The professing "Calvinist" who speaks peace (who says, "you're my brother in Christ") to anyone who brings any of the doctrines of Arminianism is a partner in and partaker of the false gospel. He is as much a partaker of the false Christ as true Christians are partakers of the true Christ. He does not truly believe that the gospel is the exclusive message of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ. He is lost.

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