

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Live by a New Love

Scripture: 1 John 2:7-11

Code: 62-13

Live by a New Love

Now tonight we continue in our study of the wonderful epistle of John, 1 John chapter 2. And we find ourselves looking at verses 7 to 11. Many people consider the epistle of 1 John to be very basic. I remember as a young Christian growing up, everybody said when you first become a Christian, read 1 John because it's so basic, it's so foundational, fundamental. And there's a sense in which that's true, it is fundamental to our understanding of the gospel and who is really a Christian. But there are certainly many subtleties, many profound elements to this epistle that escaped me for many, many years when I read it. And as a young guy in my early days in seminary, even a little bit before that, I was looking for a way to understand the New Testament better and I found a way to do that by repetitiously reading it. I read an old book, How To Master The English Bible by James M. Gray(?), an early president of Moody Bible Institute who suggested that if you wanted to retain the Bible, you had to read it repetitiously and not just read it once and keep moving.

And so, I decided that what I'd do is read every book of the Bible every day, break it down into sections that were manageable and I would do that for 30 days. Then I figured at the end of 30 days I would pretty well have in mind what was in that portion of Scripture. And I started with 1 John and it was brief, only five chapters, so I decided I'd read it every day for 30 days. At the end of 30 days I felt like I still didn't quite have it all so I said I'll go 60 days. At the end of 60 days I said I don't think I've got it yet and I went 90 days. And so every day for 90 days I read 1 John until it became very familiar to me. And as I look back even then in my early twenties of my life, even though I knew what was in the book, the real depth and the real profound elements of this book even then escaped me. There is in this book an almost unending supply of spiritual truth that keeps revealing itself the more diligently one studies so that in a sense there is clear truth on the surface, but much more down below as you go over it and over it. Here we are many, many years after that exercise of mind. By the way, I did eventually did finish the New Testament, it's about a two and a half, three-year process to do that but you have to stick with the 30 days and not do 90 or it will elongate the whole process.

But looking back to what I thought was somewhat of a grasp of 1 John, I now realize I didn't know even a small portion of what has since come to my understanding through further study of God's Word. And here we are again going back to 1 John and I preached this book early in the ministry

here, I don't even remember which year, I didn't bother to check, but as I knew we were going to do it again, I went back to look at my old notes and I said to myself, "You didn't really preach those, did you? You couldn't have gotten away with that." Well anyway, I'm glad we're doing it again.

Now 1 John chapter 2, and I suppose if I live long enough to do it again I'll think that what I'm doing now didn't quite get where we could have gotten had we known more. But as we come to 1 John, you need to be reminded, it's been a few weeks since we've been in here, that in chapter 5 and verse 13 there is a given a purpose. And this is pretty typical of John. Somewhere along the line he sort of drops in the purpose for the writing of his books so that there's never any mistake, he certainly did that in the gospel of John chapter 20 verse 31. Here in chapter 5 verse 13 he says, "These things I've written to you," he gives his reason, "who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life." So here is a book written for the purpose of giving us confidence that we're saved. That's simply what the purpose of the epistle is, to give us confidence and assurance that we are saved. And that then leads to another purpose, or another fulfillment back in the first chapter, verse 4, "These things we write so that our joy may be made complete." You certainly can't have complete joy if you're not sure of your spiritual condition. And so in order to provide confidence and the consequent joy, John has written this epistle.

And in the epistle in which he attempts to give us the joy, the complete joy of knowing you're really a Christian, he lays out the proofs, the evidences, the tests by which one can measure one's true condition. Now simple to divide them, they're either doctrinal tests, or they are moral tests, or spiritual tests. The doctrinal tests have primarily to do with two things...the doctrine of Christ, we've considered a little bit of that in the first four verses of chapter 1. We're going to get a lot more of it as we get along a little further in the second chapter, the end of this chapter, the section at the end focuses on the deity of Jesus Christ. So the first doctrinal test is really one's view of Christ and the second one is one's view of himself. And that has to do with sin. So we could say that it's true of Christians that they understand the deity of Jesus Christ and they also understand their own depravity.

There are also those tests that are moral tests, or spiritual tests, the verification of our salvation not by what we believe but how we behave, how we conduct ourselves. And there are two primary tests in that category, one is obedience which we already noted in verses 3 through 5, having to do with keeping His commandments, and here we come in verse 7 to the second one of those which is love...love. But love while it is only one of two tests is really the supreme one because love is the greatest commandment. We're clear on that. Love is elevated above everything else in the Scripture. Loving God is elevated above everything else in terms of a person's relationship to God and loving one another is elevated above everything else so that loving God is fulfilling all the commandments and loving each other is fulfilling all those commandments that relate to our relationships. So love is the supreme commandment. Love then becomes the supreme duty and therefore love becomes from the behavioral side, from the side of the moral test, the supreme test of

our salvation.

Let me read these verses to you starting in verse 7. "Beloved, I'm not writing a new commandment to you but an old commandment which you've had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you have heard. On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you which is true in Him and in you because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. The one who says he's in the light yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the light, there's no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, doesn't know where he's going because the darkness has blinded his eyes."

Here we are again introduced to the familiar theme of light and darkness which we already saw in chapter 1. Light and darkness represents eternal life, that's light or eternal death, that's darkness. Whether one is in the light, possessing eternal life, or in the darkness sentenced to eternal death is made manifest in this matter of loving. Verse 10 is the one verse that mentions the word love, it's only mentioned one time, but it's very clear it's the theme of this section. "The one who loves his brother abides in the light." That's the key here. That is the key moral test. Earlier, the one who keeps the commandments is the one who knows God and in him the love of God has truly been brought to perfection through salvation.

So here we're looking at love. And the passage that flows from verse 7 to 11 could basically be understood if we just follow a simple little outline. Love as an old commandment, love as a new commandment, and then a final warning dealing with love as a way of life. Let's start by looking at love as an old commandment.

In verse 7 he says, "Beloved," and that's a very familiar address by John. You find it, if you'll notice, over in chapter 3, for example, verse 2, "Beloved, now are we the children of God." A little later in the chapter, down in verse 21, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us," and so forth. Chapter 4 verse 1, "Beloved." Chapter 4 verse 7, "Beloved." John likes to use that. In fact, it's not just in this epistle that he uses it, but he uses it in other places. For example, verse 2 of the third epistle, "Beloved..." and so forth. So John is the apostle of love. He has been called that by many through the years. He has a tenderness about him that causes him to express his affections for others. And certainly that's a fitting thing to do, particularly in an epistle where you're making love the benchmark of true salvation. John has that kind of love. It's very evident because he identifies the people to whom he writes as the ones whom he loves. He loves those who are in Christ. He loves those to whom he writes. He wasn't always, I suppose, known as a man of love, being once called Boanerges, even by Jesus Himself, a son of thunder, Mark 3:17. On one occasion in his early training wanted to call down fire from heaven to incinerate a whole village of people because they didn't comply with what

they thought he should. John was not then, we could say, by nature a tender-hearted man, but he had been seriously tenderized by the mighty work of God in His life. And so he becomes known to us as the apostle of love by the fact that he write so much about it, both in his epistles and in the gospel of John and because of the fact that he expresses affection and love so readily and so easily both toward the Lord and toward others.

And so, as he introduces him...this subject to his people, he says, "Beloved," and then he says, " I'm not writing a new commandment to you but an old commandment which you've had from the beginning. The old commandment is the Word which you have heard. I'm not writing to you a new commandment, new, *kainos*, not so much the idea of new in time chronologically, but the idea of something new in quality. I'm not writing for you something which you have never heard before. I'm not inventing something.

And as I mentioned to you last time, I'll just reiterate this, in the philosophies that pervaded in the ancient world and do even today, there is a serious missing connection. Philosophy has basically no attachment to morality, never has. In fact, in my study of philosophy which began when I was an upper-division college student and determined for my own interest that I would take upper division or western philosophy, all the advance courses I could get in the final two years of my college, I had the privilege of being the only student who signed up with the exception of one other student who had a learning disability. And so between the two of us we exhausted the same professor two years in a row to tell us everything there was to know about European philosophy. And it was a marvelously enlightening experience, particularly beneficial when there are only two people in the class. You're forced to perform and the professor is forced to answer all your questions. It was a rich experience.

But what I learned even in those days long ago was that all of these mental gymnastics, all of these machinations of the human brain, all of these meanderings through processes of thought and explanations for life and meaning had virtually no connection to how people lived. And I found, to my amazement, that philosophers while trying to be the most adept at explaining the realities of life were virtually living in the gutter morally. That has been verified time and time and time again. I've mentioned on some occasion the book by Paul Johnson called The Intellectuals, probably the most riveting book on history I've ever met. It's the story of the pinnacle philosophers of western thought, those who are the architects of our modern world. And it reads like...well it reads like a novel and it reads like a sorted novel as it plunges into the depth of immorality and incest and homosexuality that pervaded in the lives of these familiar names. People like Rousseau and Kant and Hegel and all of those kinds of philosophers.

So, there never has been a connection between philosophy and life and there wasn't in John's day. There were varying kinds of philosophies around but none of them was really connected to life. And

so they could literally believe what they wanted and live the way they wanted. And John approaches things very differently. He says, "Look, if you're a Christian, it's not like a philosophy, you can't believe this and live any way you want to live. That's not how Christians are. If you've really been changed and regenerated, two things are going to be true about your life. One is you're going to obey God, and two is you're going to love other Christians, you're going to love your brothers.

That is not just a theme in chapter 2, that's...that's essentially a theme all the way through the letter. Over in chapter 3, for example, verse 10, "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious. Anyone who doesn't practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who doesn't love his brother." There he combines those two moral tests of obedience to the Word of God and loving the brother.

In chapter 5 verse 1, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. Whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and obey His commandments." And again he links up loving God and keeping His commandments and loving each other. Similarly again, as I noted in other epistles, chapter 1, only one chapter, 2 John verse 6, "This is love that we walk according to His commandments." So again he links this idea of loving with obeying God.

So keeping commandments and loving sum up the character qualities of a person who has been transformed. We love the brethren. We have a great affection for those who are in Christ. We long for that fellowship and to render service to those who are Christ's. And John says here in chapter 2 verse 7, "This is not a new commandment. I'm not writing a new commandment. I'm not imposing upon you a new trend, as you're so often exposed to in philosophy. This isn't just a new twist. This isn't just taking philosophy to the next logical step, as has happened throughout all the history of philosophy, everybody sort of building on everybody else. I'm not writing something new, I'm telling you something old, something...he says...that's old enough so that you have had it from the beginning. It is that old commandment which was the Word which you have heard."

What he's talking about here is the word about love, about loving one another. And this is old, this isn't anything new. This isn't something John concocted or invented. This goes way, way back. It goes all the back to their experience as Jews because in the Old Testament the law of love was established by God in unmistakable terms. Leviticus, the Levitical law, all the way back into Moses, chapter 19 verse 18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself and I am the Lord." In other words, I'm telling you this and I'm God and that makes it very, very binding and very important.

The Old Testament, of course, in the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:5 demanded that God be loved with all our heart, soul, mind and strength but Leviticus 19:18 added to that, "Love your neighbor as

yourself." And that's part of the law that's been around since the very, very beginning.

So they knew that even in their Jewishness. That wasn't anything new that God wanted them to love their neighbors, that God wanted them to love those that are around them. And then, of course, the apostle Paul builds on that. Turn for a moment to Romans chapter 13 which is a familiar portion of Scripture because of its link with the Old Testament law. Paul in Romans 13 verse 8 says, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another, or he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law." Not only is loving your neighbor part of the Law, but loving your neighbor fulfills the Law. That is to say all of the Law that pertains to human relationships is fulfilled if you just love your neighbor. And then he explains that in verse 9, "For this you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet." And if there's any other commandment that has to do with human relationships it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself because love does not wrong to a neighbor, love therefore is the fulfillment of the Law."

You can say, "Don't commit adultery," but if you love your wife, you're not going to do that. If you love your neighbor you're not going to do that. You're not going to commit adultery against your wife and with his wife, it's a question of love. Now the Scripture says, "You shall not murder," but you're not going to murder somebody you love, just like you're not going to commit adultery against those you love. And Scripture says, "You shall not steal," but it's a moot point if you love someone because if you love them you're not going to steal from them. And the same is true of coveting. If you love someone, you're not going to covet. And we could go on. And if you love someone you're not going to lie to them. So Paul says love is the fulfilling of the whole Law. There's an inseparable link between loving your neighbor and obeying God. But love sums it up. When I love, I don't do those things. Those things are done in the vacuum, in the absence of love. So the message of love is embedded in the Old Testament. It's embedded in the Decalogue, the first half of the Decalogue relates to loving God, not making idols, not taking His name in vain, not having other gods. The second half has to do with human relationships, loving your neighbor and if you love your neighbor you'll not violate those elements. Jesus said in Matthew 22:37 to 40 when He was asked what's the greatest commandment, He said, "The greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart," and then He said, "and the second is like unto it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself." And then He said, "On these hang all the law and the prophets."

So when John comes along and he's teaching that you're to love one another and somebody accuses him of inventing some thing because philosophers don't like to draw moral implications out of their philosophies. That's why they choose philosophy and not religion because they can...they can be worldly wise in their own eyes and not have to give up their sin. They were used to that but that wasn't how Christianity was. John wasn't inventing something new, something novel like a philosopher. John wasn't artificially inventing some link to behavior from a belief system. It was so

from the very beginning. They knew it even before they were Christians if they had a Jewish background.

But I think even going beyond that, I think what John is actually saying here when he uses the term "beginning," is the beginning of their salvation, the beginning of their Christian life is what he's talking about. He's not talking about the beginning in Genesis. He's not talking about the beginning when God gave the Law to Moses. No, he's talking about their beginning so he says, "Look, I'm not telling you anything that you weren't told when you became a Christian." And that's important to remember. When somebody becomes a Christian there needs to be a counting of the cost and people need to be told that if you're going to be a Christian, that is a commitment to obedience, to the Law of God and love toward the people of God as well as, of course, God Himself. As New Testament believers they knew that from the very outset. John is affirming here that that was part of apostolic doctrine. That was definitely part of apostolic doctrine. It wasn't anything new at all. You literally heard it, he says at the end of verse 7, you heard it with your own ears, you heard that when you become a Christian you should be marked by obedience and love. That's part of the original gospel teaching the new believers and again I only emphasize this because it doesn't get emphasized today. Now we're being told today, you know, you don't want to put anything legalistic in the gospel, just make it pure grace and nothing else. Don't be telling people they need to live a righteous life and obey the Word of God. Don't be telling people that they need to love their brothers or you'll be cluttering up grace with some kind of effort.

Well apparently the apostles didn't feel that way. Apparently John didn't feel that way. Whoever it was that gave the gospel to these people was faithful to the intention of God that people understand what the cost is, that the gate is narrow and so is the way that you walk. So the command to love was very clear from the beginning. It's part of the covenant of obedience that you take when you become a Christian, that you will obey the lordship of Jesus Christ and you will love the brethren. We need to tell people that that's what's required of them. We also need to tell them that that's the work that God will wonderfully do in their hearts so that their obedience will not be burdensome, as we pointed out last time, and their love will not be forced or superficial.

So John starts with love as an old commandment. But then he moves quickly in verse 8 to what appears on the surface to be contradictory, love as a new commandment. And surprisingly as we come to verse 8, we're a little bit stunned because he says, "On the other hand, having just said what I said, that I'm not giving you a new commandment, I am writing a new commandment to you, I am." Well we understand that what he is saying is it's old but it's also new, and that's exactly right. I am giving you a *kainos* commandment. I'm giving you something fresh, something that is new not in time but in quality and in essence and in character. It has the idea of a new freshness to it. There's a newness to it.

Well, I mean, if it's an old thing and we heard it when we were first converted and the Jewish people have known it ever since they've known the Old Testament Law of God, if it's been around for such a long time and it's part of the Ten Commandments, what's new about it? Well John explains that and it's just wonderful. He says, "I'm writing a new commandment, its newness is this, which is true in Him and in you because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining." That's one of those deep statements that John makes.

"Which is true in Him," is the first thing I want you to understand. The newness of it is, the newness of it is it is true in Him. The newness of it is it is manifest truly in Jesus Christ. Never before, even though God said I want you to love your neighbor as yourself, even though it was clear that that was the essence of the second half of the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, even though it was very, very well known by the Jews that love was a requirement and that if you loved you weren't going to violate those commandments which were acts of hatred, virtual hatred toward others, even though that was clear in Scripture, never has that love been so clearly manifest so as to be seen in its perfection as in Jesus Christ. So that's the point of the statement which is true in Him. In other words, there is a level of understanding of the perfection of that love which was never able to be understood by anybody until it was personified in Jesus Christ. Never has the world seen this perfect love until Jesus showed it. I mean, it's esoteric in some ways, it's just not fleshed out because no matter who we look at, everybody falls short of the standard. We never can find that perfect love toward others until we see it in Jesus. The newness isn't in the essential command, the newness is in the manifestation of its perfect glory in the person of Jesus Christ.

Turn with me to John 13 and we'll learn a little more from John's account of the upper room which is, has been through the years, one of my favorite moments in the life of Christ. In John chapter 13 and verse 1, the feast of the Passover was coming, and, of course, Jesus is in the upper room and Judas is going to betray Him and He's going to be arrested and executed at this very Passover time. It says in verse 1 of John 13 that He knew His hour had come, the hour of His death had come. He was going to depart out of this world to the Father. But then this wonderful statement, "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them...and here the translators go all over the map...He loved them perfectly, He loved them eternally, He loved them to the uttermost, He loved them to the end." And what does it really mean? All of the above...all of the above. He had loved His disciples to perfection, that's the way to translate it, I think. He had loved them to divine perfection. And it had been seen in so many ways.

It unfolds even in this upper room event because He begins to make promises to them that demonstrate His love, that He's going to send the Holy Spirit and if they ever need anything they can

pray and ask and He'll provide it. And that the Spirit is going to come and lead them into all truth. And that His peace is going to be with them and that He's going to prepare a place for them and come and get them and take them back. And in the meantime He's going to do things through them the likes of which they've never dreamed. All these are reflections of His great love for these, frankly, unlovable men. He loved them absolutely to perfection. He loved them a level that is not possible for us. And so that is the newness of this old command, that it is seen as manifest in Jesus Christ for the first time. And, you know, you can extend that and say we all prior to Jesus Christ, that is all of those who knew the revelation of God, all of those who knew about the true and living God had the only information available to them in the written Old Testament and while it was wonderful to have that, it was but a shadow of the reality to come. And Christ is not the shadow but the substance. And so when Christ comes, who God is becomes manifest to us in an absolutely new and marvelous way.

And that's what John means here. He says this is new in the sense that it's seen in the wonder of its perfection in Jesus Christ. And this moment gives us a good illustration of that because they're in the upper room. If you compare the other gospel writers, you find out they're sitting around the table, Jesus is going to be betrayed and He's going to be going to the cross. He's going to receive all of the vitriol and the hatred and the animosity of the Jewish false trials and all of the things that went on in that horrifying experience. He's going to be crowned with thorns and beaten and all of those terrible things and crucified. He's been telling them about that all along, but frankly their minds aren't on Jesus, their minds are on themselves. And at the very moment that this is going on, they're having an argument about which of them is going to be the greatest in the Kingdom. Such a disappointing group. After three years He's nearing the cross. In fact, even when He takes them in to the garden to pray a little while, they fall asleep. But here they're arguing about which of them is the greatest. In the middle of the argument, none of them is going to do what needed to be done because if you're going to have a dinner, you recline. People had a lounging kind of dinner, long time like all those Italian dinners we had these last couple of weeks, that went on for like three hours and six courses. And we loved every minute of it, I can tell you that. Not only the food...not only the food but the fellowship was really marvelous.

And they recline and actually lounged. And so there was one very necessary thing and that was because people were barefoot and sandaled, they had to wash feet. Nobody had done that. No servant had been provided to do that. And when they're all arguing about which of them is the greatest, none of them is going to volunteer because he might therefore manifest a certain disqualification for greatness, having taken a posture of humility. And so nobody would do that. And in the midst of all this debating, Satan comes in and he puts it in the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. And all this is going on. Then in verse 4 Jesus Himself in the middle of this rose from supper, laid aside His garment, took off His outer coat, took a towel and wrapped it around His waist. Poured water into the basin, began to wash the disciples' feet and wipe them with a towel with which He was

girded. I mean, it's just an amazing act of love. These disciples were so hard-headed, so indifferent to His suffering, so selfish and proud. Here they are debating about all of this, here one of them, Judas, who also got his feet washed is about to go sell Jesus for 30 filthy pieces of silver. And yet in the midst of that, there is this perfect love even manifested when Jesus gave the dipped...the sop in which they dipped in the paste to eat. It was always given first to the honored guest, and He gave it to Judas.

You know, He humbled Himself, Philippians 2 says, and took on Himself the form of a man and in the doing of that He made a demonstration of the love of God, the likes of which the world would never know. We saw a little bit of it this morning, didn't we, in His compassion on the disciples, His compassion on the suffering, multitudes who were sick. His compassion on them when they got hungry. I mean, this is the heart of God, perfect love, selfless sacrifice, perfect humility. It's fresh because it's in Him manifest as never before. But that doesn't stop there.

Go back again to 1 John and I'll show you something else that John tucks in there in verse 8. This is amazing. It's new in the sense that it's in Him and in you. O my, what a great statement that is. Not only is there a newness to it because of its manifestation in Christ, but there's a newness to this love, there's a freshness to this love because it's now manifest in you and for the first time it has been seen in Christ in all its perfection. And it has been seen in you in a dimension the likes of which has never been seen before. That's just a glorious realization of what it means to be a new creation. The manifestation of our love is something new, something incredibly wonderful. Jesus said in that same night in the upper room, and He said, "I'm going to send the Holy Spirit and He's going to come. He's been with you but He'll be in you." And that's the dimension...there's some kind of qualitative difference. I'm not sure that I can explain what it is, I don't know that the Bible attempts to do that, but whatever the relationship of the Holy Spirit to believers in the past was, it was a "with," and whatever it is to us, it's an "in." And John uses the same word, "in you...in you." And when the Holy Spirit comes in you, you'll be all wrapped up in loving one another and loving Me and loving the Father as we love each other and we love you, it goes on to say in John 14.

And that's part of what happens when you become a Christian. You become a Christian, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in your life and the fruit of the Spirit, according to Galatians 5:22, the fruit of the Spirit is...what's the first? Love...love. Romans 5:5 says, "The love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts." It's not so much the love that we give toward God but the love gives us that we give toward each other. That love has been dispensed by God and deposited in believers. In Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 16, "He would grant you according to the riches of His glory," this is Paul's prayer, "be strengthened through the Spirit so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge."

Paul says...I just hope that you can grasp the length and breadth and height and depth of this love of Christ that's been granted to you and deposited in you. And Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:9 says, "As for love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another," 1 Thessalonians 4:9. What a great truth.

So John says, "Look, I'm not telling you something new, it's something very old but there's a newness to it. And the newness to it is that you've seen it in its perfection in the incarnate Christ. And another element of the newness is it's in you...it's in you." And back to that verse, "And all of this is happening...he says...because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining." What does this mean? The darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining? Well it's pretty obvious what the true light is, who's that? Jesus, "I am the light of the world," John 8:12. And the Greek says the true light has already been shining. This new capacity for love, this fresh dimension of love, experience of love, deposit of love in your life is possible and real because the light has already been shining, because Christ has come and inaugurated a new day. He's inaugurated the kingdom of light. And the kingdom of light is dispelling the darkness. With the arrival of the Messiah was the inaugurated of the kingdom and the light began to shine. And as time goes on, for now the light overlaps the darkness, but the light will increasingly extinguish the darkness until the darkness disappears in the glory of the millennial age at the end of time. The darkness is *paragetti*(????), the darkness, present tense, is fading and the light is coming.

A similar statement is made in verse 17, "The world is passing away." The long-awaited age to come has arrived, it arrived with Messiah, favorable year of the Lord, the end of the age, the latter days, the last days has come. The time of salvation has arrived. The New Covenant was ratified and the light is shining. And as I said, the present age and the coming age overlap. The world is the present age, the Kingdom of Christ is the coming age. We in whom the light shines are the overlapping kingdom, citizens of the age to come. And because Messiah came and inaugurated that age, because according to Galatians 1:4 He is delivering us out of this present evil age, we are given this new capacity to love.

So it's an old commandment but it's also new because it belongs to this true, new age, the age of the dawning of the light. It's a wonderful thing to think about history that way. Centuries and centuries, millennia and millennia of darkness and then the light dawns two thousand years ago, the light and the darkness overlap. The darkness is fading, the light is moving toward the great glorious shining return of Jesus Christ when He establishes His Kingdom of light on the earth and the whole earth is filled with the shining of His glory. So an old commandment and a new commandment.

Thirdly, we see love not only as an old commandment and love as a new commandment, but love as a way of life...love as a way of life. This isn't just philosophy. This isn't just ideology. In verses 9 to

11 John just gives some plain flat-out black and white clear illustrations. Here the principle is applied. The test is given to the one who claims to be a Christian. It's unmistakable. Verse 9, "The one who says he's in the light, yet hates his brother is still in the darkness until this moment."

I don't know how you can miss that. If you hate, you're not in this kingdom. If you hate your brother, if you hate others, if you hate those in the Kingdom, if you hate anyone essentially, if you don't see people the way God sees them then He's not in control of your heart. Love proves everything when connected to sound doctrine. The Gnostics, you know, they claimed to be enlightened, they disdained any unenlightened hoi-polloi. Christians aren't like that. We are the truly enlightened. We are honestly the elite of the world, though not many noble or mighty. We know what the world desperately needs to know and is completely ignorant of. We know more than all the wise men of the world. Where is the scribe, where is the wise man, Paul says in 1 Corinthians, line them all up. The world by wisdom did not know God.

But we do. But we don't look down on them as the Gnostics did, as the enlightened looked upon the unenlightened with scorn. Rather our hearts go out in love to them, love to even those who don't know the Lord enough to break our hearts over their lostness and certainly our love goes out to those within the family of God whom we love in Christ. And no matter what else we do, we may be, in Matthew 7, you know, we did this in Your name and did that, many mighty works, cast out demons. But in 1 Corinthians 15, if you don't have love it's all noise, it's all noise. So the practicality of it is, if you're a true Christian it's going to show up in your love, not perfect love, love is not going to be the perfection of your life but it will be the direction of it. You're going to have a heart of love for those around you, not a heart of hatred. You're going to want to serve those around you, not demand from them. You're going to want to help those around you, not harm them. You're going to want to come to the aid of those around you, to lift them up not to step on them. And particularly is that true among believers. If you don't have a love to be with God's people, it's a clear evidence that you're in the darkness no matter what you claim. And that's John, absolutely black and white. The one who says he's in the light yet hates his brother, is in the darkness until now. It means no change has happened. No work of God in the heart.

Then the contrast comes in verse 10. "The one who loves his brother, on the other hand, abides in the light." And he adds, "There's no cause for stumbling in him." Now that's pretty reasonable. If you're walking in the light, you're not going to trip over something. He sees where he's going. He's not like somebody groping in the darkness. "Great peace have they that love Thy Law and they shall not stumble." When you love and obey the Law of God, when you express the love of God, the love of Christ to others, you're walking in the light, you're not going to stumble, you're not going to fall. And what does that mean? Well a stumble would be literally a way of expressing sinning against others. Stumbling in the Scriptures is sinning. And in this environment what he's saying is very

similar to what Paul said in Romans 13, he's saying if you love people, you're not going to stumble into sins against them. You're not going to violate people. You're not going to commit adultery against them. You're not going to commit murder. You're not going to steal. You're not going to lie. You're not going to covet. If you love people you don't sin against them. And even though we don't perfectly do that, we...we feel terrible remorse when we fail to love as we ought to love.

So the contrast is pretty clear. John says if you're a true Christian, you're going to love people and you're not going to sin against them as a pattern of life. So there is a new commandment to love, added to an old commandment to love. And then he talks about the life of love. And he closes with a comment on the absence of love in verse 11. "But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness...doesn't know where he's going...because the darkness has blinded his eyes."

That's really a...it's a difficult thing if you can remember back to this kind of an incident, to be in absolute pitch darkness, isn't it? And to grope your way around trying to find where you are. Well that's exactly the way it is with people outside the Kingdom. They are known because they hate their brothers. They have disdain...anything from disdain to indifference could qualify as a form of hate. Sometimes disdain and indifference seem to us polar opposites, but in fact they're not. My indifference to someone comes out in the end equal to my disdain. Whatever might be that attitude, whether it's just absolute indifference or whether it's utter hostility, it's virtually to have no regard for their condition. And if there is any regard, it's to worsen it. Such people are in the darkness no matter what they claim. They are outside the Kingdom. They don't walk in the light. They don't have any spiritual life. They're like the ones back in chapter 1 verses 5 and 6. "God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all, if you say you have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, then what you say doesn't mean anything, you're just lying." And that kind of person doesn't know where he's going and so he just stumbles all over the place. Sins against himself and against people and mostly, of course, against God, the religious, the wise, the philosophers claim to be in the light, but their whole life is full of crashes, blindly stumbling into damning sin. Proof of their condition is they don't love. And they move, as Jude puts it, to the blackness of darkness which is eternal judgment.

John can give us our conclusion to this brief look at this passage. If you turn to John 13 again, in this account in John 13, after the washing of the feet there's a little dialogue with Peter and then there's some teaching from the Lord. And a couple of verses that stand out, in verses 34 and 35. You remember now, John said it's an old commandment but it has a newness to it. It has a freshness. Jesus says the same thing, that's probably where John got the license to make that interesting and surprising contrast. In verse 34 Jesus said, "A new commandment I give you..." Well, it's not new, loving one another is not new, that's a part of Levitical law, that's part of Exodus, the Ten Commandments repeated in the second law, Deuteronomy, that's not new. Well here's the new part, "A new commandment I give you that you love one another as I have loved you."

They never could have known that before. And there we're back to what I told you, the remarkable part of the newness of this is that it is manifest in Jesus Christ for the first time so that the visibility of what it means to love your neighbor is clear. So He says I want you to love in a way you've never known before, I want you to love the way I've loved you. That's how I want you to love others. And so that asks the question...how had He loved them? And the answer to that is the whole story of three years of meeting every need they had, of providing for them food, providing for them teaching, providing for them forgiveness and grace and mercy and patience and everything that He provided for them. It even means washing their dirty feet while they were arguing about which of them was the greatest.

So how did He love them? Well how did He just love them? By washing their filthy feet. And I think that's sort of a metaphor summing up how Jesus had loved them all through His ministry. They always needed their feet washed spiritually, didn't they? As much as they certainly believed in the Lord and as true as their salvation was, they managed to collect a lot of dirt on their feet...doubts, failures, weak faith, manifested itself again and again, pride, self-centeredness, competitiveness, ambition, greed. Through it all He kept loving and loving and loving and loving, patiently and patiently, patiently. And here in what really is symbolic of the whole relationship, this is like a metaphor for their whole time together, He gets down on the ground and He washes their filthy feet. And you can't get lower than that. The slave that did that was considered the lowest slave in the household because feet got dirty in those days. And so this is the newness of it. It's never been seen like this. So when you think about loving each other, we understand the idea of loving, but never before have we seen the reality of loving in flesh until we see it in Jesus Christ.

How important is it? Verse 35, "By this all men will know that you're My disciples." How they going to know? "If you have love for one another." You'll know because that's a test. Everybody else will know because of your love for one another. And what kind of love is that? It's a humble love. It's a self-sacrificing love. It's a bowing and serving love. That kind of love, sacrificial love, "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."

So if you love like that, you will pass the test and you will know...look at your heart. Do you pass the doctrinal test? Do you believe in the deity of Christ? And do you understand your own depravity? How you doing on the moral test or the spiritual test? Are you desiring and longing to obey the Word of God? And do you love others? That's how you know if you're a Christian. And by that love not only do you know, but by that love the people who see you know. What a great statement. "By this all men will know that you're My disciples if you have love for one another." That's the heart and soul of our Christian testimony. That's the foundation on which the gospel becomes believable...believable. Let's pray.

Father, thank You again as we always do at the close of a message. We thank You because this word comes down from above, words from heaven about love. We thank You that You've given them to us so that we can have confidence, so that we might know that we are saved. These things are written that you might know that you have eternal life and that knowing that might bring us complete joy. Sometimes we look at our lives and we see our failures and yet there is that longing to obey Your Word. We look at our lives and we see how badly and poorly and selfishly and proudly we treat others and yet we feel the longing in our heart of love. We feel a love, a deep love for those that are outside the Kingdom, almost a heartbreaking love and we also feel a love of strong affection for those that are inside the Kingdom as we embrace the richness of that sweet Christian fellowship. And those are evidences that You've changed us, that You've shed Your love abroad in our hearts, that we don't have to be taught by man to love because we're taught by You to love, that that newness which was for the first time manifest in Christ is also new because it is for the first time manifest through us by the Holy Spirit. May we be known by our love. May the whole world know that we're Yours because of our love. Make us people who love that we might enjoy the confidence of our own salvation and have a testimony to others of the unmistakable and mighty work that Christ has done in us. These things we ask in His name. Amen.

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