

LESSON 4 ~ THE OLD NEW COMMANDMENT

JULY 26, 2020

Background Scripture: 1 John 2
Lesson Passage: 1 John 2:7-14 (NIV)

Introduction: I like the Peanuts cartoon strip because we so often see the truth about ourselves. There's one when Linus protests, "*I love mankind; it's people I can't stand!*" Love in the abstract is a cinch. It's loving those irritating people that we rub shoulders with that is not always easy. In 1 John 2:3-6, the apostle gives a test by which you can know that you truly know Jesus Christ, namely, if you walk in obedience to His word. In 2:6, he states, "The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." Then, in 2:7-11, John goes on to apply this test of obedience more specifically to the area of love. If Jesus' life and especially His death epitomized love, then those who claim to follow Him are obligated to live in love. In the Upper Room, on the night He was betrayed, Jesus demonstrated His great love for the disciples by taking a towel and a basin of water and washing the disciples' feet. After that unforgettable object lesson, He drove the point home (John 13:14-15), "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you." He was not instituting a ceremonial foot-washing service, where everyone comes with clean feet to be washed! He was saying something much more difficult to practice, that we who follow Jesus must set aside our rights and serve one another out of love.

Scripture Reference: 1 John 2:7-11 (NIV)

7 Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. 9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. 10 Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. 11 But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded him. 12 I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. 14 I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Topic Explored: "*The Old New Commandment*"~ In chapter (John 13:34-35), Jesus said, "*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*" Obviously, those words of Jesus were behind John's words about the old, new commandment. John counters them by saying that we don't need new truth, but rather the old truth that his readers learned early in their Christian experience. On the other hand, if you want "new" truth, John says that the old commandment is the new commandment, which Jesus gave to us. In short, loving one another is an essential mark of a true Christian.

Memory Verse: *11 But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded him.* (I John 2:11) NIV

Lesson Focus: I John 2:7-11 (NIV)

Verse 7 ~ "An old commandment." "A new commandment." What does he mean? What is old and yet new? John never specifically identifies the old, new commandment in these verses, and he only mentions love once in this entire section. But his reference to the new commandment makes it obvious that he is referring to Jesus' command to love one another. This commandment was old in two senses. First, in that Moses taught it in the Law ([Leviticus 19:18](#)). And Jesus identified this as the second greatest commandment, after the command to love God with all your being ([Matthew 22:37-40](#)). So, in that sense, this command had been with God's people for 1,400 years. But the main sense in which this was an old commandment is that these believers had heard it from the very earliest days of their Christian experience ([1 John 3:11](#); [2 John 5](#)).

Verse 8 ~ But, John says the commandment is also new, in that Jesus had issued it as the new commandment. Now, John is indicating that this old commandment is, in some sense, new. What does he mean? First, it was new in its emphasis, in that Jesus brought it together with the command to love God as the summation of the entire Law. Second, it was new in its quality, in that His own self-sacrifice on the cross became the standard. Third, it was new in that in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus extended the definition of neighbor to go beyond race or religion. Anyone in need who crosses our path is our neighbor. He said that we should love even our enemies. Finally, it was new in the disciples' continuing apprehension of it. The love of Jesus on the cross is inexhaustible. We can never plumb its depths. And so, as we grow in our understanding of His great love, we will grow in our apprehension of how we must love one another. So, Jesus' command is both old and new.

Verses 9-13 ~ "How do you measure your progress in this love thing?" How do you know how far along you have come, or whether you have even begun? John answers that in Verses 9 and 10. You can test yourself by asking, "What is my attitude toward my fellow Christian, my brother in Christ, the man who, like me, professes faith in Jesus Christ?" "He who hates his brother." The dictionary tells us that hate is "a feeling of extreme hostility or extreme dislike of another."

We know well the feeling, this dislike, this aversion to someone, a sense of extreme hostility toward another. Ah, yes, but it can be expressed in two different ways. It can be active; in that we indulge in malicious talk or injurious actions toward another. We can strike them, or beat them, or throw our garbage over their fence, or mistreat them in some way. We can attack them; we can slander them behind their back. All these are active expressions of hate, and perhaps most of us think of hate only in this sense. But hate can also be expressed passively and still be hate. It can be expressed by indifference, by coldness, by isolation, by exclusion, unconcern for another. Now John says that he who hates his brother is not a Christian. He is "in the darkness until now," i.e., he has never come out of it. He is in the state of darkness in which the whole race is plunged and into which we were all born. He has never been removed from that. Such an attitude of hostility, indifference or unconcern toward another is a mark of an unregenerate life. But notice that the apostle is careful to make a distinction between walking in the darkness, and being in the darkness. To be "in the darkness" is to be un-regenerated. "He who loves his brother abides in the light." That is, the fact that he loves is proof that he is abiding in the light. He is in fellowship with the Son of God. He is walking in openness and honesty before God, and the proof

of it is that he loves all the disagreeable brethren around him. Though he may be irritated by them, or upset by them, he does not cut them off, he does not exclude himself from them, he does not go away and say, "Let them go their way and I'll go mine." Or, "I'll forgive, but I'll never forget." Oh, no. He still shows that heart of concern which is born of the Holy Spirit, the love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us.

Verse 14 ~ He who hates has never been born again, has never passed into life. The Apostle John says that he who hates his brother is in the darkness. He does not know where he is going. He has no understanding that this can lead to murder or to mayhem, to heartache and heartbreak. He goes blindly on, stumbling on in his hateful attempt to do evil to his friend, or brother, or companion, whoever it may be. But the result is, he is only damaging himself and all he loves. He has no idea where he is going. Furthermore, he is blinded, John says, "the darkness has blinded his eyes." The word that is used here is a word that means "to make insensitive" and it implies that if we live in this way, we ultimately come to the place where we no longer can respond. Hatred grips us and hardens our heart and it is no longer able to be softened by any force that comes upon us. This is the warning that runs all through the Scriptures about the nature of human life. When we give way to feelings of hatred, we inevitably harden our own heart.

Now, John says, only the worldly can do this. A Christian may temporarily succumb to this kind of thing. Yes, he can walk in darkness, temporarily, but he no longer is in the darkness. He is no longer a child of darkness. The light of God's love has come into his heart. If he is not aware of a struggle between the expression of hate and a sense of concern, and conscious of guilt over his attitude of hate, then he ought to wonder whether he has really passed from death unto life. It is possible for a Christian to *walk* in darkness; but he is not *in* the darkness.

Let's talk about it. . .

Making it personal:

- If we walk in love toward one another there is no problem that cannot be worked out, there is no reason for division or schism among us, there is nothing that can separate us if we walk in the light as he is in the light. Oh, the hunger of the world for the manifestation of love. And oh, the hunger of God that those yearnings of the world might be satisfied by Christian hearts which reflect the heart of God.

Closing Prayer: *"Our Father, in these days in which we live, abounding wickedness has turned many hearts cold. Their love has died, they have become indifferent to one another. Lord, we pray that Your love may be manifest in us, that we should show forth Your love in this dying world. We ask this in Christ's name, Amen!"*