

The “New” But Old Commandment I John 2:7-11

Last week we looked at John’s words of encouragement to the church to find assurance in our relationship with God. John understood the peace or “rest for ones soul” that comes from a God who loved him and demonstrated unconditional love for him.

But, God doesn’t do all of the work. He requires that we do our part to guarantee our salvation and relationship. John showed us that we can find assurance in our relationship with God by being obedient to God, by allowing the Truth of Scripture to influence or change our lives, by allowing God’s Spirit to help us evaluate our lives thus bringing freshness and an edge to our faith, and by following the example of Jesus.

John continues in I John 2:7-11 and begins to tell how we can follow the example of Jesus. He restates the importance of God’s command to love people. Once we have experienced love, the return or retaliation of that love can result in the completion of unity in Christ. John understood the difference between knowing that God loves us and experiencing the love of God. Love is a verb, an action that requires effort. It is the action of love that helps us to have knowledge of love.

In our society today, this concept seems to be reversed. We think that because we have feelings or emotions of adoration, that our minds automatically comprehend what true love is. But our knowledge of love is a result of actions done for us or to us. Therefore, we KNOW that God loves us because there was action taken to ensure our salvation and relationship. Just as we KNOW that our spouses or friends love us because they work, do various chores at home, or they give us gifts.

Unfortunately, some of us have distorted views in regards to love because of what has been modeled to us through different people. People called certain actions love yet they weren’t love at all. For those of us who experienced distorted love, the need to surround ourselves with true loving relationships is vital. It helps to correct our concept of love. The life of Jesus is a guide to help us correct that which is not what it should be.

So John begins in I John 2:7 and states:

Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment, for it is an old one you have always had right from the beginning. This commandment – to love one another – is the same message you heard before.

1. The Old Commandment (7)

John is not claiming something new, and he is making it very clear that he is not adding to the commands of God. In fact, John is simply making reference to **Leviticus 19:18** which reads:

"Never seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord."

Jesus even reiterates this command in **Matthew 22:38-40** when he states the two greatest commands of God.

Jesus replied, " 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the other commandments and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

In Matthew 22 I want us to notice a couple of things.

a. The love of God and people are equally important.

I would even go as far to say that our love of God is linked to the love of people, and vice versa. Jesus when talking about forgiveness stated in **Matthew 6:15**:

But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

How we treat people does say something about our view of God, and our view of God has impact on how we treat people. God's forgiveness is linked to our forgiveness of others.

So often we separate these two relationships- our relationship with people and God. Our love for God, no matter how intense and influential it may be seems more personal and private. We develop our relationships with people based on how we are treated by them, or by what we can get from that individual. But God is telling us that the more we love him the more we will show love for people, and the more we love people the more we show love for God. These two types of relationships are connected.

b. The love of God and People are the foundations of God's commands.

But Jesus' words continue in Matthew 22 and he tells us that all commands of God and the demand of the prophets are all summed up in our love for God and mankind. Let's take the Ten Commandments for example in **Exodus 20:1-17**.

The first four commandments have to do with our love for God. If I love God then I will not worship anyone else, I will not make idols to worship, I will not misuse the name of the Lord God in a derogatory way, and I will take time out to spend time with God.

The last six are commandments that have to do with the love of people. I will love and honor the ones who God has placed me in their care, I do not murder

because I love people, I do not commit adultery because I love people, I do not steal from people because I love them, I do not tell lies against people I love, and I do not allow jealousy or envy to hurt or damage my love for people.

If we refuse to obey the commands of God, then we are damaging either a relationship with God or a relationship with someone else.

Love is that which seeks the highest good in the one loved, and since the highest good is the will of God, love is doing the will of God. This old commandment is one that is a challenge to the church today. We need to understand that our relationship with God and with people are equally important, and those relationships should dictate what we say and do.

But John continues in **I John 2:8** and says:

Yet this commandment is also new. This commandment is true in Christ and is true among you, because the darkness is disappearing and the true light is already shining.

2. The Old Commandment is Enhanced (8)

How can John say that this command to love God and people is now new? What has happened between Leviticus 19 and I John? Well, with the coming of Jesus Christ to earth all kinds of concepts and understandings changed. In **John 13:34** Jesus says:

"So now I am giving you a new commandment; Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other."

Jesus brought even more clarity to his command of loving others. He states, "love them, like I love you." How did Jesus love us? **Ephesians 5:2** says:

Live a life filled with the love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was sweet perfume to him.

Jesus gave us sacrificial love. It seems that just the mention of the word "sacrifice" in our culture today is always combated with the question, "well, what's in it for me?" But a sacrificial love is one that goes beyond affection to self-sacrificing service to each other. But some may say, "that's impossible!" Nobody does that. But Peter in **I Peter 1:22** says:

Now you CAN have sincere love for each other as brothers and sisters because you were cleansed from your sins when you accepted the truth of the Good News. So see to it that you really do love each other intensely with all your hearts.

Now, because of what Jesus has done for us it is possible to love each other sacrificially because we have Jesus who is able to help us get rid of the old sin nature, thus helping us to cast our self-centeredness aside. Paul gives us a glimpse of foundation of this kind of love for mankind in **I Corinthians 10:24**:

Don't think only of your own good. Think of other Christians and what is best for them.

Do we consider how our actions are going to effect others before we do them? Do we live our lives as an encouragement for other believers, with the goal of stirring them on further in their walk with God? Or do we simply live our lives out as things are thrown our way, basing our reactions by how it effects us or makes us feel?

Sacrificial love is love that is others-focused and not self-focused. So often our walk with God is so focused on our relationship with him alone. We work at understanding God more and more, we search scripture to find new lessons for the day, we go to church, to bible study, or whatever other type of church function, we look to see what lessons God wants to teach from day to day. But, it is very clear that our relationship with God is connected to our relationship with people. God tells us that if we love him, then we should love people.

You may say, "Well, its hard to love certain people." We allow our emotions to dictates whether or not we love others. But remember, love is an action and choice, not a feeling. We can do something for someone else in the name of love. There maybe someone who we have harsh feelings towards, or maybe there is someone who we know doesn't like us. God still expects actions of love to take place between the us, whether by treating them with respect or with consideration. But, also he tells us that if we can't love people then we can't love God.

John makes this point in **I John 2:9** and says:

Anyone who says, "I am in the light" but rejects another Christian is still in darkness.

John tells us to make the transition from dark to light.

3. Make the Transition from Dark to Light (9)

John talks more about this later on in **I John 3:14**:

If we love other Christians, it proves that we have passed from death to eternal life. But a person who doesn't love them is still dead.

If we are Christians there needs to be a difference in our lives today than what our lives were like before we asked God to come and live in us. The transition from dark to light. **I John 1:5-6** states:

This message he has given us to announce to you: God is light and there is no darkness in him at all. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness.

One of the evidences of our transition is that of loving people. There is evidences of making this transition and these evidences should be obvious not only to us but to others as well. There needs to be fruit constantly being produced in our lives. The light needs to shine and not just merely exist.

But John continues on in **verse 10** and clarifies the evidence of light within ones life. He says:

But anyone who loves other Christians is walking in the light and does not cause anyone to stumble.

We looked at this idea of sacrificial love that takes on the concern of others. All of our actions, somewhere somehow, do effect people. It can impact them directly or indirectly, and it can impact them in a positive manner or in a negative way. We need more effort and focus placed on God in our lives, and when that happens there will be more focus on people, because God loves people.

If our actions effect each other, then we are accountable to each other. We are to be more focused on others and less on ourselves. We should be working on making our transition from dark to light everyday, because it will effect people.

Finally, John says in **verse 11**:

Those who reject other Christians are wandering in spiritual darkness and don't know where they are going, for the darkness has made them blind.

4. The Danger of Spiritual Darkness

Jesus said to people in **John 12:35-36**:

"My light will shine out for you just a little while longer. Walk in it while you can, so you will not stumble when the darkness falls. If you walk in the darkness, you cannot see where you are going. Believe in the light while there is still time; then you will become children of light."

If we are not walking in Christ, allowing his truth and his commands to live out in us, then we have the danger of falling away, thus resulting in uncertain wandering. The focus of life is taken away or hidden away thus making our life meaningless. Satan would like nothing more than for us to get our eyes off of God. **II Corinthians 4:4** says:

Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that