

1 John 2:7-11

“The commandment, false claim and contrast”

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I. Intro

John offers these “two personal tests” to indicate our position as true believers of Christ. They indicate the transformative work of Christ seen two ways.

Test 1: 2:3-6 Obedience

Test 2: 2:7-11 Love

Last week our focus was upon the action of obedience and not just intellectual agreement. It is clear based upon 2:4 that John was comparing the verbal profession of some who “*Say they are Christians*” with those whose actions reveal that they have a relationship with Jesus. I also believe that there is usually a progression in maturity that centers upon what it takes to motivate us towards obedience:

- A. Baby Christians: View obedience as a “have to” as if they are a “slave” responding to a master.
- B. Immature Christians: View obedience as a “need to” as if they are an “employee”.
- C. Mature Christians: View obedience as a “want to” because the relationship between God and him is one of love.

We most likely started our relationship with God viewing obedience as “I have to” and then graduated to “I need to” but maturity happens when the “I have to” and the “I need to” becomes “I want to”! Immaturity is only motivated to obedience by warning and reward instead of being motivated to obey because we love Him!

There are several things about John introduction in verse 7 to the second personal test that I find interesting:

1. Brethren: The best Greek manuscripts don’t use the word translated here as “Brethren”,

instead they use a word that is translated “divinely loved ones” which is interesting as John’s 2nd test is that of loving one another. It is unfortunate that in the English language that a person can use the same word to express how they feel about their spouse or ice cream. When we use the same words to describe affection to two vastly different things we can indirectly devalue the one while inflating the other.

2. I write no new commandment: The reason for this was that they had heard this from the beginning. You will find this subject mentioned in Leviticus 19:18 spoke on the need to “Love your neighbor as yourself” and as such clearly it is not a New Revelation. Next Jesus had said in Mark 12:28-34 that of loving God and loving each other that all the other aspects of the law hung and such it was not even NEW with regards to the words of Christ. In the Greek there are two words that can be used for “NEW”. The first means “NEW IN TIME” to which John clearly says that this commandment isn’t NEW IN TIME. The second word means “NEW IN QUALITY”. It is the second definition used here as John wants to assure his readers that the “quality” of the commandment hasn’t diminished over time. “God’s Love” has always been essential from the beginning, and they had heard of the necessity of treating each other the way Jesus treats us. Love was an essential part of Christian teaching and that is why John says that this isn’t a “NEW commandment” as far as something they had heard. Instead, it was something that needed to be refreshed and rekindled in their minds. Throughout this section John will reveal three ways in which this “OLD COMMANDMENT” was refreshed:

As we look at this passage we can see that it consists of three parts!

II. Vs. 7-8 The commandment

- A. Vs. 7-8 The commandment: It is here that I notice that John mentions three reasons for it!
 1. Vs. 7a Remind: Since the commandment wasn’t new as they had received it from the beginning as Jews and from the beginning of their Christian encounter this was used to remind them the LOVE is an essential aspect of their life. Love both as the motive of obedience as well as loving each other in the body of Christ wasn’t something that was NEW to them but something that they may have needed to be reminded of.
 2. Vs. 8a Renew: It was NEW or fresh three vital three ways:
 - A. New Emphasis: Prior to this the commandment was “general” and was one of many. But here this commandment is given preeminence. But not only was it placed above the others it was given a “Fresh new” place as it is the motivation behind our obedience to do everything else. Doing the right thing must not be out of fear or reward...it isn’t because of the law that we obey it is because of love that we do so.
 - B. New Example: This was always true in Jesus (verse 8) but now it His love as our example of how we are treat each other. Our example isn’t how other Christians treat other Christians in the body of Christ but rather how Jesus treats each of His brothers and sisters. He didn’t mistreat those who mistreated Him. Jesus Illustrated in His life a love when people:
 - Sinned against Him

- Mistreated Him
 - He loved Peter even through Peter's impulsiveness
 - He never doubted Thomas even though Thomas doubted
 - The truth is: **Jesus died not only for His friends, but He also died for His foes!**
- C. **New experience:** That is to say that "LOVE" becomes the New Experience that is fundamental to transformative work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. "**Love and Light**" go together as does in the opposite "**Hatred and darkness**". It isn't satisfactory for the Christian to merely talk about love they are to practice it to one another. As verse 9 will indicate for a person to claim a relationship with Christ while hating his brother make that persona statement untrue. Humanity falls into two classes of people; Those that walk-in light and love and those that walk-in darkness and hatred and the clarification of which class they belong to isn't defined by words but instead by actions! **There is no middle ground, the heart of humanity is NEVER EMPTY it will be either Hatred or Love, but it will never be both at the same time!** It is impossible to be in fellowship with God while being out of fellowship with God's people at the same time! There is no such thing as the "Lone Ranger Christian" we are designed to be in fellowship with each other. The Christian life has two relationships: The Vertical relationship towards God and the Horizontal towards fellow followers of Jesus. And like a marriage what God has joined together man must not separate. Christian love towards each other is not to be a passing emotion, a blind sentiment; NO, it's a practical activity that applies countless times a day. Through God's word Christians are exhorted to:
1. Prefer one another Rom. 12:10
 2. Be of the same mind Rom. 12:16
 3. No judge one another Rom. 14:13
 4. Receive one another Rom. 15:7
 5. Admonish one another Rom 15:14
 6. Build up each other 1 Thess. 5:11
 7. Bear one another's burdens Gal. 6:2

In short loving other Christians means to treat them the same way God treats us, and this has to do with not mere words but attitude as well as actions.

3. Vs. 8b **Rekindle:** As the darkness is passing away and true light is already shining "LOVE" needed only a spark to be fanned into a flame in their lives. Selfishness is always associated with darkness.

III. Vs. 9 The false claim

- B. Vs. 9 **The false claim:** Here we note John records three aspects to this false claim:
1. **The profession:** "**He who says he is in the light**": It is a wonderful claim to make but it is more than a statement it is one that is visible and not a mere declaration.
 2. **The example:** "**and hates his brother**": The proof is not in the assertion it is in actions. In true Christianity our profession is never in words only as they must always be associated by our actions. Knowledge without the accompaniment of transformed actions is worthless trivia.

3. **The outcome:** “Is in darkness until now”: The claim without the accompaniment of the right action is proof not of being in the light but instead of having never left the darkness! “Darkness” according to verse 8 should be “passing away” and “true light already shining”.

IV. Vs. 10-11 The contrast

- C. Vs. 10-11 **The contrast:** Is stated both in the positive in verse 10 and the negative in verse 11.
1. Vs. 10 **Positive:** Here what we learn is that “LOVE LIGHTS OUR DIRECTION” and that we are either going to be in light or darkness, love or hate but we will never be in both together at the same time. John speaks of a man who loves his fellow Christian, and this is a direct consequence of his abiding in the light and love of Christ. The result of this is that there is “no cause of stumbling” in him as his words match his actions. There are three stages of a person who is in the light and love of Jesus:
 - Walk in light
 - They are in the light
 - They abide in the light
 2. Vs. 11 **Negative:** This person is also marked by three things:
 - A. Vs. 9 **He lives in darkness:** Though the person may think they are in the light their behavior indicates darkness. They are Self-deceived as John writes that they “say they are in the light” as darkness has blinded them. These are those that cause trouble in the body of Christ, they may very well think that they are mature followers of Christ, but their actions are divisive.
 - B. Vs. 10 **He is a stumbling block:** This person over time will not be satisfied with living in blindness they will set themselves in the way others to stumble them. It is very serious to walk in darkness but it’s dangerous to do so and lay down trying to trip up others. There was a man who was out walking in the dark when he saw a pinpoint of light in the distance. The light seemed to be moving all over the place as not on a set pattern. As the man drew near the light he saw a most unusual sight the man with a flashlight was a man who was blind with a white cane. The man who had observed him at a distance had to know what purpose would a blind man need for a flashlight in the darkness? The blind smile at the question and said, **“I carry a flashlight so you can see me not so I can see as I don’t want you to stumble.”** Love makes us **steppingstones**; hate makes us **stumbling blocks**! We ought not to be the cause of people falling over each other instead we need to be the cause of lifting each other up. People come from different backgrounds and opinions and Paul dealt with this Christians worshipping on different days, eating different diets and his words were “love one another” “Walk in love”... Today I would say that this would apply to the Covid situation and the different views “Love one another” “Walk in love” and “Don’t judge one another”!
 - C. Vs. 11 **In stunts maturity:** A blind person can’t advance forward as easily as one with sight who walks in the light. Maturity is our goal, becoming more consistent walking in light and love is what ought to be the trajectory of our life now as

believers. Nothing will take us off course quicker than hatred and bitterness. We cannot generate Christian love by our own power, but we can confess the lack of it and ask the Lord to grant us His love for those whom we have harbored hatred. The active work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is in the business of the continual transformative work of taking “the old things” and making them “new things” in our experience!