

October 4, 2015 by Steve Brandon



Light Loves

1 John 2:7-11

1. The Old Commandment (verse 7)
2. The New Commandment (verse 8)
3. The Love Commandment (verses 9-11)

I invite you to open your Bibles to 1 John. Our text this morning is found in chapter 2. We will be looking at five verses this morning: verses 7-11. And as you are turning there, I want to remind you once again of the purpose behind this book of the Bible. Because, it's important for us to keep this purpose in mind. It helps to make sense of what John writes.

So, John is writing it to those who have come to faith in Christ. Or, at least to those who have professed to come to faith. And he is seeking to assure them that, indeed, they are in the faith. That they are children of God. That they have eternal life. Indeed, this is exactly what John says in chapter 5:13, ...

1 John 5:13

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life

In other words, these words are written to believers. And he wants to help them truly know that they have eternal life. It's helpful to know how John gives this assurance. Because, there are many who seek to give assurance of salvation in an entirely wrong way.

Note that John doesn't give assurance to those who prayed some sort of prayer or said some sort of words. I have seen this often enough, when some preacher leads people in the sinners prayer. And when it is done, he says, "If you prayed that prayer, welcome to the kingdom of God," giving assurance that now all is fine with their life. Though it is only true if it is genuine. There are so many "false" conversions that 1 John comes as a timely warning to us.

Note that John doesn't give assurance to those who have some kind of feeling in their stomach. Salvation isn't a good feeling that we have about Jesus. No, assurance comes when you see God actually working in your life, bringing forth evidence of a changed life. The external fruit in your life is what will give you assurance. The external fruit in your life can give those around you assurance as well that you are a genuine believer in Christ.

John is constantly pointing out what is true of those who believe in Christ. They love God. They love the brethren. They walk in purity. They follow the commands of God.

And in various ways, he goes over these same themes again and again and again. Do you love God? If you do, here's what it looks like if you do. Do you love the brethren? Here's what that looks like. Do you practice righteousness in your life? Here's what it looks like. Do you keep the commands of God? Here's what it looks like.

And in all of this, John is asking his readers to look at their lives and test themselves to see if indeed they are in the faith. And what was meant for the original readers is certainly meant for us as well. God is calling us (through the book of 1 John) to examine our lives. Do we love God? Do we love the brethren? Are we walking in righteousness? Are we keeping his commandments?

From time to time throughout this short book, he addresses his readers directly. Sometimes he calls them, "Children." Sometimes he calls them, "Little Children." Sometimes he calls them, "Beloved." These are expressions of love for his readers. And often, they signal an important statement.

It's as if John is saying, "Listen up! This is very important!" And our text this morning begins with such a word. "Beloved ..." (1 John 2:7). Literally, this word means, "Loved ones." It's an expression of genuine care and concern. John genuinely cared for his readers. He wanted the best for them. As I want the best for you.

This is one of the things that he wanted to emphasize in this book. So, listen up!

1 John 2:7-11

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

My first point this morning comes from verse 7.

1. The Old Commandment (verse 7)

This is obviously the main point of verse 7. John writes, ...

1 John 2:7

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.

John's heart here is to reassure his readers that he's not telling them anything new. It's not like they heard one message and believed in that message, but now are hearing something else from John, and now, they need to believe him as opposed to what they heard at the beginning.

Sometimes this is the way that cults work. There's a message on the outside that people hear. But, once they become the initiated, there's another message on the inside. Now that they have become "enlightened."

I remember a few years back when Mitt Romney was running for president, I did some reading about the Mormon church, thinking of the possibility of a Mormon president. Much of Mormonism sounds good. It sounds wholesome. And indeed much of it is. I believe that many Mormons are some of the most honest and upright people that you will ever know.

But, they do have their "secrets." And some of them have to do with their "initiation rights," that is, their baptism into the church to be permitted to visit the temples. I remember watching a stealth video of a baptism service that took place in the temple; it was downright scary with the sorts of things that they were doing and saying. Before watching that video, I had wanted to visit a Mormon temple. But, after watching that video, I don't want to have anything to do with visiting that place.

And much of it has to do with the secrecy of the event. Much of it has to do with the strangeness of it. There's nothing about that service that resembles Christianity.

Christianity is not secret in any way, shape or form. We are open and honest about our message. When people visit Rock Valley Bible Church and see what happens on Sunday morning, they hear the word and they meet the people. I sometimes comment to them how they have experienced Rock Valley Bible Church. This is what we have. We have God's word, which we love. And we have each other, which is enough. There's nothing secret about us. There's nothing hidden about us. What you see is what you get.

And that's part of what John was saying. He said, "what I am telling you now is the same thing that you heard from the beginning." This isn't some greater message. This isn't something that you mature to. This is what it means to be a Christian.

Last week, I told you about those who say that Jesus is the Savior of those who believe, but the Lord of those who follow in discipleship. As if there is some deeper message, some deeper commitment. But, there is no deeper message. The message is one message. It's what you heard at the beginning.

You say, "What is that message?" Well, look back at chapter 1 and verse 5.

1 John 1:5

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

In other words, God is a holy God. There is no imperfection in him. There is no impurity in him. But, we are sinful, and thus, alienated from God. We must acknowledge our sin.

1 John 1:8

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:10

If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

But, beyond simply acknowledging that we are sinners, we must confess our sins. That is, confess that they are wrong. Confess that we need God to forgive us of our sins. And when we do, we can know the joys of forgiveness.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And when we know that cleansing, we will walk in the ways of God! That's what verses 6 and 7 are all about.

1 John 1:6-7

If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

See, we can't claim to be forgiven if we still walk in the darkness. No, when Christ cleanses us, he brings us into the light. And it's when we walk in the light that we know the cleansing from sin that Christ brings in our lives. And this is the message that John preached. This is the message that his readers heard from the beginning.

1 John 2:7

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.

And this is the message that we bring at Rock Valley Bible Church, every week! And for some, this isn't enough. Human nature is such that we are always looking for something new.

The philosophers of Paul's day that would sit in Athens in the Areopagus and, "spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new" (Acts 17:21) is not too far from our day. We are always looking for something new. We want new clothes, a new car, the newest iPhone. We are always looking for the next viral video. We are always looking for the next franchise quarterback. We are always looking for the next new movie. We are always looking for the next hit song.

But, John says this, "We have nothing new." Isn't newness always the seduction. Here's a new preacher! Let's go listen to him! Here's a new teaching! Let's go learn about that! Could it be that many went out from John's midst, because of some new teaching that came along and lured them away? In 1 John 2:18, John warned of the antichrists coming. In 1 John 2:19, John spoke of how many left, and presumably followed the antichrists. In 1 John 2:20-21, John then spoke of how they indeed knew the truth, and shouldn't be persuaded by those who come along and teach something different than them.

1 John 2:20-21

But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge. I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

Listen, at Rock Valley Bible Church, we don't have anything new. But, we do have the gospel. It's not without reason that Paul said to those in Corinth, ...

1 Corinthians 2:1-2

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Paul's message to those in Corinth was singular. It was about Jesus. It was about Jesus upon the cross. It was about Jesus upon the cross bearing the sins of those who believe. And to God's people, this is enough. Paul says, ...

1 Corinthians 1:22-24

For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

So, at Rock Valley Bible Church, we have nothing new. We simply have what was proclaimed from the beginning. But it's enough. The hymn writer says it this way, ...

I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.
I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true;
It satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.

Refrain:

*I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory,
To tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love.*

I love to tell the story; more wonderful it seems
Than all the golden fancies of all our golden dreams.
I love to tell the story, it did so much for me;
And that is just the reason I tell it now to thee.

I love to tell the story; 'tis pleasant to repeat
What seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet.
I love to tell the story, for some have never heard
The message of salvation from God's own holy Word.

I love to tell the story, for those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song,
'Twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long.

Is the Old Commandment sufficient for you?

Now, in verse 8, John gives us a twist. He says that there is something new. Let's look at verse 8. I'm calling this ...

2. The New Commandment (verse 8)

1 John 2:8

At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

You say, "What is happening here? What 'new commandment' is he writing about? Is there something secret that we need to know? Is there something more to our message? Is there something that was lacking what we heard at the beginning?" We get a hint of what John is talking about when he says that this new commandment "is true in him." That is, there is something about Jesus that brings forth this new commandment.

I believe that the best way to understand this is to turn to John's gospel and chapter 13. So, turn back there. In this chapter, Jesus talks about a "new commandment."

I trust that you remember the scene. Jesus is with his disciples on the night before his betrayal. And Jesus knew that he would be betrayed (John 13:21). Jesus knew that his disciples would scatter and be unfaithful to him (Matthew 26:31; John 13:38). And yet, an amazing scene took place. Let's pick it up in verse 1, ...

John 13:1-5

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

When Jesus came to wash Peter's feet, you catch a glimpse of what a strange and unusual thing this was for Jesus, the master, to wash the feet of his disciples.

John 13:6-11

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

Enough of the object; and now comes the lesson.

John 13:12

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

After this, Jesus dealt with Judas and his upcoming betrayal. So, skip down to verse 31, ...

John 13:31

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

What does verse 34 mean? "A new commandment?" Jesus didn't give his disciples a "new commandment." He gave them an old

commandment. He gave them the greatest commandment.

You remember when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was. He quoted first from Deuteronomy 6, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). And then, he quoted from Leviticus 19, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31). And then he added, "...There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:31).

So, the commandment to love one another was nothing new for Jesus. So, why does he call it "a new commandment"? What's he talking about? It has to do with the example of love that Jesus just demonstrated for his disciples. Isn't that what Jesus refers to at the end of verse 34. Let's read it again, ...

John 13:34

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

This is the newness of it. Not so much the content of the command to love. But, the intensity. Jesus said that our love for one another should match the love that Jesus had for his disciples. And when people see this sort of love, it will give proof to them that you are indeed, a child of God.

John 13:35

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Last week I spoke about Charles Sheldon's book, "In His Steps," when people began to really think about and pray about "What Would Jesus Do." And with all of the strength that God would give, they would follow in that path. I made the comment that "revival broke out" in that town. Why? Because, people began to see the love of Christ on display. As they loved one another, the entire town knew that something supernatural was at work. And it drew others to follow Jesus as well.

Because, the love of Jesus is an infinite love. Look back at verse 1.

John 13:1

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

The idea here is that Jesus loved them completely -- to the uttermost. He loved them perfectly. And his example here of washing their feet, the lowliest of tasks, was an example to be emulated.

John 13:15

For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

Some have taken this to mean that Jesus was giving another ordinance for the church to practice, the practice of foot washing. And there are churches that do this on a regular basis. They wash one another's feet. Now, there is certainly nothing wrong with that. Only, it might limit the scope of love that Jesus expressed here. It wasn't simply that we should wash one another's feet. It's that we should one another as deeply as Jesus loved.

And in many ways, that takes Leviticus 19:18 (You shall love your neighbor as yourself) to a whole new level. It's now, "You shall love one another as Jesus loved you."

Isn't this what we looked at last week? Turn back to 1 John. Last week, we looked at 1 John 2:6, which says, ...

1 John 2:6

whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

And one of the ways that he walked was his deep love for his disciples.

1 John 3:16

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

This is the new commandment. Love! And love deeply, unto death. And John says that this love was "true in him" (verse 8). But, we also see that this love is true "in us" (verse 8). Look again at verse 8, ...

1 John 2:8

At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

The reality is this: for those who know Christ, this new commandment is working in their lives as well. That's because God changes people. And he is the source of our love. Look over at chapter 4 and verse 7.

1 John 4:7

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Do you see how God is the source of love? Love comes from God. If you love, it is because you have been born of God. If you love, it is because you know God. And in this way, loving others is one of John's core central ways that we know that we have eternal life. Because, love is the fruit of knowing God.

This leads nicely to our last point this morning. We have seen The Old Commandment (verse 7) and The New Commandment (verse 8). Now, we come to verses 9-11. I'm calling it ...

3. The Love Commandment (verses 9-11)

Really, it's not a commandment in these verses, but it is the expression of one who has eternal life.

1 John 2:9-11

Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Again (like in chapter 1), John confronts us with the issue of light and darkness. And again (like in chapter 1), we see people claiming one thing, and yet living another. And John doesn't go with the claim. He goes with the evidence. The claim here is that we are in the light, but the evidence is hatred in the heart. That means that the claim cannot be true.

It's like claiming that you just took a shower when there is mud on your face. Or like your child saying that no, they didn't eat the cookie, yet there are crumbs on their lips. It's like saying that you didn't touch the wet paint, when you have the exact color of paint on your hands.

I think one of the best ways to understand these verses is to look at John 9.

John 9:1-7

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

See how the Pharisees responded with hatred toward Jesus.

John 9:13-17

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" And there was a division among them. So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

So the Pharisees didn't believe that this man really was blind. They went and sought his parents for proof. And we come to this point, ...

John 9:24-34

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

And here Jesus finds the man that he had healed. He says to him, ...

John 9:39-41

Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

So coming back to 1 John, these Pharisees were not loving. They were in the darkness. The darkness has blinded their eyes. May we love one another and walk in the light.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on October 4, 2015 by Steve Brandon.
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