

Love (I John 2:7-17)

I John 2:7-8 – New light on an old commandment! Love is not a new invention that appears first in the New Testament. God's motive has always been to show us and teach us love. See Matthew 22:35-40 cp. Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18. Love is a part of God's essence. See I John 4:16 cp. Psalm 107:43; Jeremiah 9:23-24. The commandment to love our fellow men is ancient and based on the character of God. As Israel struggled with the matter of obeying God's law, they lost sight of the love that was to be an integral part of obedience.

Jesus came to refocus the lens on God's law, so that people could see the imperative need for love in our hearts. See Matthew 5:43-48; Matthew 19:19; Mark 12:21; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8. Consider the entire statement in Leviticus 19:18 and consider how carefully James based his letter on the proper understanding and use of the law and love. See James 5:9; 2:1-13; 3:1-18.

What makes this commandment new? We now have a perfect example of love – Jesus Christ. See John 13:34-35 ("*... as I have loved you...*"); 13:1-15; 15:12-13 cp. I John 2:6. Jesus Christ is not merely an example. He gives power and life by His Spirit and through His Word. See John 1:16-17; 6:63; II Corinthians 5:14-17; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 4:13; II Timothy 2:1.

I John 2:9-11 – The light of God's love verifies our truth! Don't try to walk in the dark. It is a dangerous experience. Stumbling and re-stumbling will occur. Efforts to be holy and to gain Bible knowledge, without love, leaves us in the dark. Mere legal obedience is not the essence of keeping the law. Obedience must come from a heart of love. It is tempting to think of God's light as an intellectual / academic experience. However, God's truth, from His Word, will manifest itself with transformation of the heart. A heart of love and a humble, gentle spirit are more evidence of a person who knows the Lord, than an accurate understanding of doctrine.

Paul tells us that we can have powerful demonstrations of religious experiences, understand Biblical mysteries, exercise great faith, and make wonderful sacrifices – yet, without love, it is meaningless. See I Corinthians 13:1-3 cp. Romans 13:8-10. Peter tells us that the result of the new birth – the evidence of our faith and obedience to the truth is that we have genuine love for the brethren. See I Peter 1:22-23.

I John 2:12-14 – The written Word of God is designed to reveal and empower those who love the Lord. John describes some of the various levels of Christian maturity and leadership development:

- Those who have recently become children of God, knowing Him as Father, and receiving the forgiveness of sins
- Elders, as father-like figures, who have known the Lord for a long time and have continued in the faith
- Young men who are learning the ways of those who are overcomers through Christ – growing in discernment and developing their skills in spiritual warfare

John writes to them and encourages them to continue in the Word of God, so that they can be faithful to their calling. See how knowing God means to love God and His Word; to hate evil; to follow Christ and His gospel. See Deuteronomy 6:4-6; Psalm 97:10-12; John 8:42-47; 12:44-50; 14:15,21-25; 17:8,13-17,20; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 1 John 4:5-6.

1 John 2:15-17 – God’s love separates us from the world. This portion of Scripture is not to be confused with John 3:16-17. In John 3:16-17 God is loving a world of lost souls. In 1 John 2:15-17 God is not loving a world which is an anti-Christ system of unbelief and unholiness – a dark kingdom of Satan. See 1 John 2:18; 4:1-3; 5:4-5,19 cp. Revelation 12:7-12; 17:1 – 18:24. God, in His love, has delivered us from this kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His dearly loved Son. In separating us from the world, we also become partakers of the world’s hatred for God and His Son. See John 15:9-25; 17:6-26; Galatians 1:3-4; 6:14 (The cross separates us from the world cp. Matthew 16:21-26); Ephesians 2:1-7; Colossians 1:12-13; 1 John 3:1.

It is to be noted that God’s description of the ungodly world in 1 John 2:15-16 matches the temptation that Eve felt, when Satan tempted her in the garden (Genesis 3:6). It also matches the temptation that Satan presented to Christ, when He was fasting and praying in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13). See Romans 12:1-2.

The lust of the flesh

- good for food (Eve)
- “command this stone to become bread” (Satan to Christ) – satisfy yourself!

The lust of the eyes

- pleasant to the eyes (Eve)
- showed Him all the kingdoms of the world (Satan to Christ) – think of yourself!

The pride of life

- desired to make one wise (Eve)
- “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down ... He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you” (Satan to Christ) – prove yourself!