

THE OLD YET NEW COMMANDMENT

1 John 2:7-11

Intro: I hope that you all are reading 1 John at least once each week while we are going through this wonderful epistle. And I want you to know that I am not asking you to do something that I am not doing myself. And I sincerely find out that the more I read it, the more I love it. The more I read it, the more I learn. The more I read it, the more I want to read it. The more I read it, the more I become aware of needs in my own life. I am sure that in churches like ours, and like Hillcrest Chapel, we have, on the average, more Bible readers than you will find in the average church. It is a known fact that most professing Christians read the Bible very little. We don't expect non-Christians to read the Bible, but it should be expected that Christians read the Bible – and that they read it over and over again, read it daily, read it prayerfully, read it for their own spiritual growth. We see people reading books of all kinds as we travel on a bus or Tri-Met, or as they sit in restaurants (if they are by themselves). It is not unusual to see people reading a book while they are walking down the street. But I don't know if I have ever seen a person reading the Bible in a public place. We don't expect to see people reading the Bible who are not Christians. But for those of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, we ought to read the Bible more than we read any other book, more than we read the newspaper or any magazine. When the Apostle Paul was planning to go where Timothy was, he wrote these words to him:

13 Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine (1 Tim. 4:13).

And then just two verses later he added this:

15 Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.

16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee (1 Tim. 4:15-16).

Those words apply to all of us. Read, but don't just read. Pay attention to what you are reading. Pay attention to what you are to do as well as what you are not to do. Read expecting to learn what the Bible teaches. Think about what you are reading. If a verse impresses you, read it over again. Or even better, memorize it. Give yourself wholly to what you read just like you would if what you are reading was written directly to you. If you and I are faithful in reading the Word of God prayerfully and carefully,

you will begin to see changes in your life, and others will see it too. So, continue to read what you have been reading, but add 1 John to it. And if you will be kind enough to come to the Tuesday Bible Class, I will ask you to read 1 Peter, and then 2 Peter.

We ought to talk to each other about what we are reading in the Bible. That will encourage others to read the Bible as well.

When you read a book, or letter, like 1 John from start to finish, then you will begin to notice words which he uses repeatedly, words like “sin,” “commandments,” “love,” “life,” “the world,” “death,” “righteousness,” and many other good words. 1 John has a lot to teach us about God, about Jesus Christ, and even about the Holy Spirit. John even included some important things for us to know about the Devil. And, like any other book of the Bible, it is like a mirror to show us ourselves, our needs, and some of the many blessings we have in Christ. If there is anything that we should get excited about, and stay excited about, it is the reading of the Bible.

I just got word this week that when Professor Paul Felix comes to speak for us on April 1-4, he is going to speak on Psalm 119, and he is calling his series, “A Word Saturated Life.” I am really looking forward to that series because there isn’t anything that can be more important than to have our minds and hearts *saturated* with the Word of God. That ought to be a great conference.

But what have we learned from 1 John so far? (At least I hope we all have been learning.) We learned from verse 13 of chapter 5 that he was writing so that we could know whether or not we really have eternal life.

Then we learned from the opening verses of this little epistle that the Apostle John was well qualified to tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ. And he gave us a new name for the Lord: “The Word of life.”

Then he told us that his object in writing was that we might have fellowship with God the Father, and with the Lord Jesus Christ. And he said that his primary message was to tell us (in verse 5 of chapter 1) that “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” (Explain.)

From that point on (v. 6) through the first two verses of chapter 2, the

Apostle John told us that if we claim to know the Lord and yet live in sin, doing things that are contrary to the nature of God, and so displeasing to God, we are self-deceived liars. So he was asking us as readers to take stock of our own lives to see if we pass what might be called *the sin test*.

Then beginning last week with verse 3 of chapter 2 and going down through verse 6 he gave us what we could call, the test of obedience. And he made it very clear that He was talking about the commandments of our Lord. He told us that if you claim to be a child of God, but are not living in obedience to our Lord's commandments in Scripture, again he used the word "liar." See 2:4. The Apostle John was not trying to be rude or unkind, but he used strong words to make people pay attention to what they were reading. We are all guilty of being wrong about some things, but this is one thing that you can't afford to be wrong about. Where you are going to spend eternity is a matter you can't afford to be wrong about. The issue is heaven, or hell. In chapter 5 we learn that there is such a thing as sin unto death. Most people are inclined to believe that just because nothing goes wrong when they sin, that it doesn't make any difference to God what they do. But the Bible tells us otherwise. God is very patient with sinners, but no one knows how long he is going to be patient. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Those of you who were here last Sunday will remember that I briefly went through all five chapters of this epistle pointing out the fifteen commandments that John gives in this epistle, not just from himself, but primarily from God. (Read the verses again – vv. 3-6.)

Today we come to verses 7 through 11. And here we have a third test which we all need to apply to our lives. It is the test of love.

The first test is the test of sin. The second test is the test of obedience to God's word, specifically the commandments of our Lord of which we have hundreds in the NT. The third test is the test of love. Let me read these verses for you – chapter 2, verses 7-11. (Read.)

Verse 7 speaks of "an old commandment," not a new commandment.

I. THE "OLD COMMANDMENT" (1 John 2:7).

I don't think that we can understand what the Apostle John meant by "an old commandment" until we get down to verses 9, 10, and 11. He was

referring to the love that we as the Lord's people are to have for each other. Of course, we need to be kind and loving toward everyone we can, but if a person is truly saved, has been born again, or from above, he or she is going to have a special love in his or her heart for others who know the Lord.

We need to go back at this point to what the Lord answered that Pharisee who was a lawyer. He asked the Lord, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" You will find the words I am referring to in Matthew 23:34-40. This lawyer's responsibility was the interpretation of the Mosaic law. This was a good question, a basic question. If you were going to take all of the commandments of the OT, and rate them, which would you place first. I am sure that this lawyer expected the Lord to answer by mentioning one of the ten commandments, and probably the fourth commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." But the Lord didn't mention the Sabbath Day. Instead, he mentioned a command that the Lord gave to Moses in Deuteronomy 6:4 and 5:

4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord:

5 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (Deut. 6:4-5).

But then the Lord did a surprising thing. Although the lawyer had not asked for number 2, the Lord gave it to him anyway. And He, the Lord, said, "And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And then the Lord said a very important thing: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." One way the Jews divided the OT was to speak of "the law and the prophets." So the Lord was saying that all of the OT commandments fell either into one of these two commandments. These two commandments summarized what the Lord wanted His people to do. The first had to do with God; the second had to do with people. They were to show the same concern for the welfare of their neighbors that they showed for themselves.

Now, since the Apostle John was going on to speak of how Christians should love each other, the old commandment which the Christians had heard from the beginning of their lives as Christians, was that they were to love one another. It is said that one reason, and perhaps the main reason, so many people hate our President Bush, is because of his faith. He has declared himself to be a Christian. That is the way the people of the world feel about the people of God. I can assure you that if some of those politicians who hate our President were to get saved, their attitude toward him would take a one hundred and eighty degree change.

So the Apostle John was not saying that he was just repeating that old commandment, but, as he went on to say in verse 8, he was giving them a new commandment.

II. “A NEW COMMANDMENT” (1 John 2:8).

The Lord was not doing away with the “old commandment,” but He was adding “a new commandment” which was to characterize the lives of His people.

To learn what this was, we need to turn to the Gospel of John, chapter 13, verses 34 and 35. The Lord was with His disciples in the Upper Room to minister to them just hours before He was crucified. And this is what He said to them:

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13:34-35).

Now basically what is the difference between the old commandment and the new. I see two main differences. Both had to do with love for people. But the old commandment had to do with loving their neighbor; the new commandment had to do with their love for each other. Secondly, under the first commandment they were to love their neighbor as they loved themselves. Under the new commandment they were to love each other as the Lord loved them.

Now I ask you: Which is the higher standard? Obviously the new commandment is infinitely higher. If you go on reading in 1 John you come to these words which support the new commandment:

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (1 John 4:10-11).

God’s love for us, and Christ’s love for us, put an entirely different meaning on the word love. Cf. also what the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5:6-8:

6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were

yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Look wherever you choose, you will never find a love like the love that the Lord Jesus expressed for His people when He died for them on the Cross. There was nothing in any of us that caused us to deserve that love. It was all of grace. And the love that we are to show toward each other is the same love, the love of God in us.

Knowing Christ changes the direction in our lives. It is through our fellowship with Christ and with God that we draw from them, the love of God which has been poured out upon us and in us by the Holy Spirit which is given to us, which is displayed in our lives. There is nothing on earth like the love that Christians have for each other because it is God's love in us that is being displayed.

Finally, as far as our text is concerned, we come to the following:

III. CONCLUSIONS (1 John 2:9-11).

In verse 9 we come again to an expression we had earlier: "He that saith," but his life is a contradiction of what he says, and so this is a person who is still in darkness, unsaved, unchanged.

In verse 10 you have a true child of God. His love for a brother in Christ proves the genuineness of his faith. His life will be above reproach.

In verse 11 we have again a description of one who is not truly saved.

Concl: It ought to be very easy for each one of us to tell where we stand in relation to God and to Christ. We have had the test of sin. And then the test of obedience to the Word of the Lord. And now the test of our love for the people of God.

Who are your best friends? Which do you prefer, being with a person who flunks these tests, or one who unquestionably passes? All it takes to pass each of these tests is a genuine relationship with Christ, a changed heart, and a changed life. None of us can fool God. He knows each of our hearts. But these are three tests which help us to know where we stand with Him. I hope you can say with the Apostle Paul,

I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day (2 Tim. 1:12b).