

**A COMMANDMENT FOR ALL BELIEVERS
FOR ALL TIME**

1 John 2:12-17

Intro: This coming Tuesday I plan to begin the study of 2 Peter in our Tuesday Bible Class. I want to refer briefly to something that Peter said about his own teaching because I want to make the same application to our study of 1 John.

Peter did not apologize for repeating himself. In fact, it was something which he purposely did. And his words should be an encouragement to all of us who teach the Word to do the same. Sometimes pastors or other Bible teachers will repeat themselves because they have quit studying. That is not what Peter was talking about. He was speaking about how important it is to repeat what we have taught before because that is one way that the truth is written upon our hearts.

You can read the first eleven verses of 1 Peter 1 to see what Peter was writing about, but then beginning with verse 12, and going down through verse 15. This is what he said:

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;

14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty (2 Peter 1:12-16).

This ought to be why we read our Bibles over and over and over again. And that is why, when we are studying any book of the Bible, we need to read that book as often as we can. It is harder to do with the longer books, but it needs to be done with all of them.

So I want to begin this morning by reminding you of the reason the Apostle John wrote this first epistle which bears his name. The reason is in chapter 5:13. (Read and comment.)

In accomplishing this purpose we have learned from chapter 1 and as far as we have gone in chapter 2, that the Apostle John has given us three tests that each one of us needs to apply to ourselves:

- 1) In chapter 1 and going down through verse 2 of chapter 2 we have the test of sin.
- 2) In chapter 2, verse 3, and going down through verse 6 we have the test of obedience to the Lord's commandments which we find all through Scripture.
- 3) In chapter 2, verse 7, and going down through verse 11 we have the test of love, that is, of love for the people of God.

Now, as we go on through the epistle we are going to meet these tests again. But it is important that we continually apply these tests to ourselves, and if we find that we are failing on any of these points, then we need to find out why. A person who merely professes to be a Christian, but who does not really know the Lord, will fail on all of them. All of us will probably see where we can do better on all of these tests. The fact that the Apostle John comes back to these same points as he wrote this letter, shows how extremely important they are in helping us to know that we have eternal life. There is nothing more important in any of our lives that we need to be sure about.

Now assuming that we have passed these tests, in our text for today, especially in verses 12, 13, and 14 the Apostle John points out very clearly that we are not all at the same stage of spiritual growth. All of us who are saved, who have eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have been brought into the family of God by the new birth. But we all are in varying degrees of maturity. The Apostle John mentioned three, but these three can be subdivided too. I hope that we all realize that when we are born into God's family, we all need to grow. Peter emphasized that, too, in his epistles. In 1 Peter 2:2 and 3 he wrote, "As newborn babes . . ."

And then the last verse of his second epistle, 2 Peter 3:18, carries this exhortation: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."

When Peter wrote those words he was indicating that spiritual growth can be measured by how well we know the Lord Jesus Christ. We are all inclined to forget that salvation is a personal relationship with God and with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle John divided the family of God into three groups: children, fathers, and young men. We make the same divisions, don't we? Child-

ren, young people, and adults. But remember that he is not writing about age distinctions; he is referring to where we are spiritually. You may find an old man who has just been saved, who is a child in the family of God. Or it may be because he has never grown very much as a Christian. It takes time to grow, like it does in human life. The way the Apostle John described each group, helps us to know what they are spiritually.

He started out with children, little children in verse 12. One who is a child in the faith is a person who knows that his or her sins are forgiven “for His Name’s sake.” We know that John was talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. Our sins, all of us, have had our sins forgiven, not because we deserve it, but because of what the Lord Jesus did when He died on the Cross to save us from our sins. Even a babe in Christ should know this or it is difficult to know how he could be saved.

While we are talking about children in the faith, let’s go down to the end of verse 13 where the Apostle John mentioned “little children” the second time, but here he said, “I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.” A babe in Christ ought to know that God is his or her Father, that he or she is in the family of God. God loves to be addressed in prayer as “Father.” That is the way the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to address God when they prayed.

But let us move on to what the Apostle John had to say about those who are spiritual “fathers.” I don’t think that he had in mind that a spiritual father is one who has led others to Christ (although the Bible speaks of those who are the spiritual fathers of other believers). Here John was referring to those who showed the greatest degree of spiritual maturity. Both of the time he mentions fathers, John said the same thing about them. See it at the beginning of verse 13, and then at the beginning of verse 14. In both places he identifies fathers as those who “have known Him that is from the beginning.” This expression describes a Christian who has a deep understanding of God, but not just one who knows about God’s attributes, as important as that is, but the fathers are those who know God, the eternal God. They have a special relationship with God. There is a difference, you know, or I hope you know, in knowing *about* God, as compared with knowing *Him!* It is possible for a person who is not a Christian to know a lot *about* God, but only a true child of God can know *Him*. The Apostle John expressed in chapter 1 that a part of his main purpose in writing was that we might have fellowship “with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” The Apostle Paul expressed in

his letter to the church at Philippi, not that he just wanted to know *about* God, but he said, “That I may know *HIM* . . .” He was speaking about Christ, but the only way that we can know God is through Christ.

What about the “young men”? By the way, let me emphasize that the Apostle John was speaking about the whole family of God, and so we need to take what he said about fathers and young men as applying to girls and ladies in the family of God, as well as to men. The Apostle John referred to them in the middle of verse 13, and in quite a lengthy statement at the end of verse 14. In verse 13 John said that they had “overcome the Wicked One.” They had found out that the Christian life is a life in which we are involved in a warfare. We have an Enemy, an unseen Enemy, but a real Enemy nevertheless. He is much stronger than they were, even though they had grown stronger in the Lord than when they were “children.” In verse 14 the Apostle John enlarged upon why they were strong, how it was that they possessed the spiritual strength to overcome such an Enemy. Note that the Apostle John said in verse 14, “because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the Wicked One.” They had grown strong by the Word of God, and it was because the Word was *abiding in them!* *The worst thing that a child of God can do is to neglect the reading of the Word, to neglect hearing the teaching of the Word, and to fail to seek the Holy Spirit’s help in applying the Word to his or her life.* Make sure that the Word of God is abiding in you, that it is in your heart to stay! Read it. Memorize it. Meditate on it. And obey it. I hope you can begin to see how all of these tests fit together. The Bible not only teaches us what sin is, but it defends us against sin. The Bible shows us how we are to live; it is by obedience to the commandments of our Lord. And when we love each other, that is when we make the most progress in spiritual growth.

Now all of this was leading up to the fourth test: the test that we all face living in this world in which we live. We are to love God. We are to love the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to love the Holy Spirit. We are to love the Word of God. And we are to love each other, the people of God. *But we are **not** to love the world. And this is where we are facing the most danger in our lives as Christians.* It is very significant that right after the Apostle John commended those who spiritually were “young men,” full of the Word, and having been victorious over “the wicked one, that he went on to write, “Love not the world . . .”

The Bible uses the word “world” in three ways. This planet on which we

live is called, the world. The Psalmist was using this word in Psalm 19 when he was saying that the evidence of the glory of God was everywhere and he expressed it this way:

4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world (Psa. 19:4a).

Secondly, the people who live on the earth are called *the world*. Matthew used this word of the people who live on the earth when we are told in Matthew 4:8,

8 Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.

But the Apostle John, in speaking of the world, was speaking “this present evil world” as Paul described it in Galatians 1:4 where he was referring to our Lord,

4 Who gave Himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

This is the world that the Apostle John described for us in verses 15, 16, and 17 when he told us that we are not to love the world. When the Devil got Eve to disobey the Lord, and when she got her husband, Adam, to disobey the Lord, he brought this world with all of its people under his authority as it is today. The Devil can only operate within the sovereign will of God, but he is rightly called in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “the god of this world.” The word for world there is age, considering human history from the standpoint of time. We live in a fallen world, an evil world, a world in which the Devil is permitted to do as he pleases, with certain limitations imposed upon him by God. This is the reason that the world is so ungodly, and is obviously getting worse every day that passes.

The Apostle John, writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit, said, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

So you can see that this becomes another test by which we can be assured that we know the Lord, or by which we demonstrate that we do not know the Lord. Not to have the love of the Father in us, is to show that we are not saved.

As probably most of you have heard before, we as Christians have three enemies. In fact, we can say that every person in the world has three enemies. The Devil is the adversary of the whole human race, but his

target is primarily the people of God. As we are learning here in 1 John 2:15, the world is our enemy. For the present, this is the Devil's domain. He is constantly doing everything that he can to destroy the Gospel.

Last night as Lucille and I were listening to the news, we heard of a new cult. The leader of it has claimed to be Jesus Christ, but now he claims that he is the Antichrist. And he said that this is good. The announcer asked a lady who is following this idiot, was asked about sin. She responded by saying that there is no more sin, that we are free to live any way that we want to, and to do whatever we want to do. And do you know that she gave as her proof for saying what she did? She said that Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God "who taketh away the sin of the world." And she interpreted that as meaning that it is no longer possible for anyone to sin. And she really believed it. Unless God intervenes in her life some day she is going to be with the Devil in the lake of fire which will never be quenched.

Now the reason that I have entitled my message today, "A Commandment for All Believers for All Time," is because the world under the evil power of the Devil, presents a terrible and constant danger for all of us. Our third enemy is our own sinful nature. The Devil can't take our salvation away, but he can certainly work havoc even in the lives of children in the faith, and young men in the faith, and fathers in the faith. So, whatever progress we may have made in our relationship with the Lord, in the words of the Apostle Peter, we need to

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

I want to spend another Sunday on this text, especially verses 15, 16, and 17. But as I close today I want to ask and to answer the question, *What does it mean to love the world? What was the Apostle John seeking to tell us? If you are a child of God, you need to be very interested and strongly influenced by the commandments of Scripture, and this is a major commandment!*

As you might guess, this is the word you hear most about when it comes to love. It is the verb ἀγαπάω. And the form of the verb which John used means, if you are doing it, stop it, and if you are not doing it, don't ever start. It is a present imperative which means that wherever we are spiritually, we must always be on our guard against loving the world.

But what does it mean to love the world? It means to make the world and its ways the primary influence in our lives. Actually the world is never to be in that position in our lives. When the Lord was asked by the Jewish lawyer what was the great commandment in the Law, the Lord responded by quoting from Deuteronomy, but in the Greek He used this same word ἀγαπάω. This would teach us that the way to keep the world from influencing the way we live, is to keep the Lord always first in our affections. The best safeguard against the world is a strong and ever-growing love for our Lord. That is the reason that the Apostle John went on to say, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

Concl: And so let me close with this. We have hear another test of our faith. As you face the problems and needs in your life, or in your family (and we all have them), what or who has the greatest influence in your life? Do you ask yourself what pleases the Lord, or, are you like the people in the world and are only concerned what is going to be the best for you? You answer to that question will tell you where you stand with the Lord. Normally our ways are the ways of the world. But when we are saved, God’s ways must prevail, and they will if we love the Lord instead of the disastrous ways of the world. If we love the Lord, we are not going to love the world. If the world is first in our lives, then the Lord is not. If you are saved, your heart will tell you that the Lord must be first because of your love for Him.