

An Old Commandment Become New

1 John Series #5

1 Jn 2:7-11

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INTRODUCTION

A. Illustration

Two shopkeepers were bitter rivals. Their stores were directly across the street from each other, and they would spend each day keeping track of each other's business. If one got a customer, he would smile in triumph at his rival.

One night an angel appeared to one of the shopkeepers in a dream and said, "I will give you anything you ask, but whatever you receive, your competitor will receive twice as much. Would you be rich? You can be very rich, but he will be twice as wealthy. Do you wish to live a long and healthy life? You can, but his life will be longer and healthier. What is your desire?"

The man frowned, thought for a moment, and then said, "Here is my request: Strike me blind in one eye!"

-- Thomas Lindberg, Stevens Point, Wisconsin. Leadership, Vol. 6, no. 4.

B. Ours is a world that is often filled with the evidences of hatred, discord, and various kinds of Animosity

1. It is the sad case that countless numbers of people have been destroyed by the evil actions of one person or group of people against another person or group of people
2. Wars have been fought, individuals have been tortured, and careers and character have been assaulted and often it was for no other reason than somebody decided to act hatefully toward another
3. One of the greatest tragedies is that among those who have done the greatest damage to others have been people who claimed to be Christians

C. In our study of this first of John's letters, it has become quickly clear that John insists that There is more to being a Christian than making the claim – it also takes action

1. You can't claim fellowship with God (or other believers) and walk in darkness
2. If you say you have no sin, or that we have not sinned, we're just lying and we make God a liar as well
3. If you claim to know God and refuse to keep his commandments, again, you're just liar because people who love God do what he says

D. But, as important as it is to love God, John says it is important to love other people

1. 1 Jn 2:7-11 (read text)
2. John's whole discussion to this point has focused on knowing God
 - a. John wrote to reveal things about God that had become clouded by lies
 - b. he knew believers wanted fellowship with God and with Jesus Christ
 - c. he also knew that believers don't live in a social vacuum, devoid of people

3. In fact, there is always an intricate connection between loving God and loving people

E. John wrote to remind his readers that there is an answer to all the hatred, animosity, and bitter Actions that people inflict on one another – an answer found in Jesus Christ

1. The key point, however, is that it is not just some theoretical or theological answer
2. It is a very practical answer that depends on how we treat the people around us

I. AN OLD COMMANDMENT BECAME NEW (1 JN 2:7-8)

A. The old commandment

1. It could not possibly be a new thing for John to write that people ought to love each other, for that commandment is actually very old
 - a. Leviticus 19:17-18 'You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD. NASB95
 - b. Leviticus 19:34 'The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. NASB95
 - c. Deuteronomy 10:19 "So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. NASB95
2. Jesus taught that the Law of Moses already required people to love both God and others
 - a. Matthew 22:36-40"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' "This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." NASB95
 - b. so it is clear that the command to love our fellow human beings is an old one

B. At the same time it is a new commandment

1. One thing that immediately comes to mind is Jesus' own words regarding love
 - a. John 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." NASB95
 - b. it was not a new commandment to say that we should love one another
 - c. the new in the commandment was the qualifying aspects of the command to love one another
 - 1) "even as I have loved you"
 - 2) "that you also love one another"

2. Jesus said that there was an specific result beyond the effects of the love shared
- a. “all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another
 - b. the question might be asked, “What do they know if we do not have love for another, or if our love is of a different kind than the love of Jesus?”
3. This new commandment to love is all about a love with a unique nature to it
- a. love was raised to a new standard in Jesus Christ
 - 1) his was simply not the standard love found even where it is practiced for at the core of his love were qualities not found in the love common among people
 - 2) his love was
 - a) pure
 - b) righteous
 - c) sacrificial
 - d) selfless
 - e) universal
 - b. human love is, almost without exception, limited in many ways
 - 1) limited in terms of the people we choose to love
 - 2) limited in terms of what we’re willing to give to others
 - 3) limited by selfish concerns for our own well-being
 - 4) all of this necessarily changes when we love people like Jesus loved

C. Don’t miss how this point fits in with what John has already said

1. 1 John 2:3-6 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. NASB95
2. The very next thing that John says is:
 - a. 1 John 2:7-8 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. NASB95
 - b. we’re still talking about how we live, not just what we might claim to be

II. IT'S A MATTER OF WALKING IN THE LIGHT OR WALKING IN THE DARKNESS

A. Remember our earlier discussion about light and darkness

1. God is light and in him there is no darkness at all
 - a. therefore, you cannot claim to be in fellowship with God and walk in the darkness – it's simply inconsistent and contradictory
 - b. if you love God, you will keep his commandments
2. He has commanded us to love one another
 - a. that command is both old and new
 - b. it is a command so thoroughly connected to living a godly life that to act unlovingly is to negate our claim be walking in the light

B. John puts the unloving person in the darkness

1. 1 John 2:9-11 The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who 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. NASB95
2. Walking in the light takes us back to those two most important commands identified by Jesus
 - a. Matthew 22:36-40 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And He said to him, " 'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' "This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." NASB95
 - b. loving God and loving other people enables you to walk in the light -- anything else is darkness

C. Our problem is that John puts it in stark terms: we either love people or we hate them

1. Our tendency is to miss the import of the statement because we don't see ourselves as "hating" anyone (or at least, very few)
2. As far as John is concerned, there is no neutral ground in human relationships
 - a. Westcott: "Indifference is impossible; there is no twilight in the spiritual world"
 - b. David Jackman (The Message of John's Letters, p. 54)

There is a certain sort of Christian piety which imagines that security is to be found by being hermetically sealed off from other people, even from other Christians, in a recluse-like detachment. . . .

The more a Christians gets wrapped up in himself, concentrating on the cultivation of his own character, or the preservation of his own virtue, the less clearly will he see the light. He has become self-centered and it will not be long before self-love takes over. And the greatest enemy of real love is self-love. That is the root of hatred. What Robert S. Candlish said over a century ago remains true: 'A selfish religionist is sure to

become either morbid or stupid. It is by sympathy and brotherhood that the fire of personal Christianity is fanned.

3. How might we hate people? (adapted from William Barclay)

a. by making others as small and insignificant as possible

1) a great many of us never think of others all while making sure our own needs, wants etc. are quite well provided

2) when we act like nothing matters but ourselves, we are hating our brother

b. by treating others with contempt

1) we do that by thinking and acting toward others as if they were somehow inferior to ourselves

2) when we hold low opinions of others, we are hating them, for low opinions never promote an active love for people

c. by treating people as if they were nothing more than a nuisance

1) when we think and act toward others as if they were nothing more than a bothersome fly, we are hating them

2) this is a far more common attitude than you might be willing to admit

d. by regarding people as enemies

1) we do this by feeling threatened by others – by their successes, or their ideas, or anything that we might have to acknowledge as good

2) when we regard people as enemies, we will likely seek ways to defeat them rather than loving them

CONCLUSION

A. Hatred leaves a person stumbling around in the dark; love enables a person to walk in the Light, for that person is practicing something that is like God

B. Love may well be the most important thing we ever learn to practice

1. By loving God, we find the motivation to seek him and obey his commands

2. By loving other people we show the effects of God's work in our own lives

3. Both kinds of love are essential to walking in the light instead of the darkness

C. The question for us all is: "Do you love people or hate them?"

1. Don't answer too quickly lest you cheat yourself out of an opportunity to grow

2. Don't wait too long lest you become enamored with yourself and end up hating others

D. Invitation