

1 John 2:6-11 (NKJV)

6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

7 Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.

8 Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.

10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

How are Christians to live?

We could answer that a whole lot of different ways and many of them would be correct.

We should live by faith.

We should live thankfully.

We should live in prayer.

We should live expectantly.

We could go on and on. Scripture is pretty good about telling us how we should live.

Many of you have read the book "In His Steps", which is a fictional story about a community who started asking the question about everything they did, "What would Jesus do?" And over time it changed their lives and the outcome of their lives.

Well here is a verse this morning that is essentially telling us to do the same thing.

He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

Now, what does that mean? Should we all fly to Israel, put on robes and sandals, and walk around preaching, teaching and healing?

Obviously not.

We find the meaning in our context this morning. We find how we should walk as Jesus walked.

These two things are clear. Prior to this quote we see the importance of **obeying God** and **obediently guarding His Word**. This was not describing a perfect life, but it was describing a life that **keeps coming back to God's Word**. It keeps **applying it** and **submitting to it** and **honoring it**, no matter how compelling the competing desires might be and no matter what failures they have had in the past. So after this quote to **obey God's Word** we are commanded to **love our brothers**. I think it is safe to apply this command to **"live like Jesus"** to both priorities, obeying and loving. In fact the test of **loving our brothers** is probably a **subset** of the test to keep **God's commandments**.

So in what way are we to walk as Jesus walked?

What does it mean to walk as Jesus walked?

We cannot miss when we read the Gospel that Jesus was continually communing with His Father. He was so attune with His Father's will that He could say, **"if you have seen Me you have seen the Father."** Christ lived His life, He walked, in a continual awareness of His Father and with a desire to do His Father's will.

Theologians have come up with a term that describes that kind of living.

It is a latin term. It is **Coram Deo**.

RC Sproul says this:

"The big idea of the Christian life is *coram Deo*. *Coram Deo* captures the essence of the Christian life."

This phrase literally refers to something that takes place **in the presence of**, or **before the face of**, God. To live *coram Deo* is to live one's entire life in the **presence** of God, under the **authority** of God, to the **glory** of God.

To live in the presence of God is to understand that whatever we are doing and wherever we are doing it, we are acting under the gaze of God. God is omnipresent. There is no place so remote that we can escape His penetrating gaze.

He goes on to explain that it is more than just grudgingly accepting that there is a God who is Sovereign. No. It is recognizing that the **highest value of a human life** is to live in such a way as to glorify that Sovereign God.

Essentially it means to see life as an opportunity to love God. **This life is for loving God**. That is how Jesus walked. He lived to please His Father. He lived in step with His Father's will.

I have noticed a trend in my **life** and my **focus** and my **understanding** over the years. There are sins I powerfully want to do that God does not allow. I suspect all of us could say the same. Although it seems, for some of us, they

are very obvious things and, for others, they may be more subtle and difficult to spot. But anyway we have sins we are tempted to do in thought or deed. The question then is, why not do them?

When I was young, my reasons tended to be on the **negative** side.

I would ask something like, would committing this sin I am tempted to do **damn me**? It didn't take me long to understand that there is no good thing I can do to **earn my salvation** and there is no bad thing I can do that can **undo my salvation**. So that wasn't the issue.

Now, could committing this sin be the **final straw** in proving that I do not have Christ in my heart? Yes. That is a truth worth reckoning. That is a serious consideration. And it was one I had some regard for.

But I think probably, the biggest consideration was that if I disobey God, God is very likely to discipline me. I had some experience with being disciplined by an earthly father, so I had a precursor to make me not want my heavenly Father to do **His** spanking. And I have had some of those spankings as I would guess you have as well.

But all of the reasoning I was doing had its focus on avoiding pain. It is good as far as it goes. Proper fear is a very good thing. But it is not the **whole picture**. In fact, I think it misses the **most important** part.

We stand before God. And one day we will stand in front of Christ literally. And I would guess our knees will bow quickly.

And at that point there is a crystal clarity about at least two things.

1- **Our Savior is worthy** of every thought, word, deed, intention that we have ever had that was in obedience to Him and Glorified Him.

And 2. And this is the part that has grown over time. This is what I was slow to realize and it made it difficult not to envy those who get away with sin. **We will be rewarded for those things that we have submitted to Christ in our lives for eternity.**

We will be rewarded for those things that we have submitted to Christ in our lives for eternity.

Not only is Christ **worthy** of all of our obedience and sacrifices. But He will make every one of them **worth our while**. It is **in my best interest for eternity** to submit my life to Christ. It is the greatest pleasure that I can have for myself to do what Christ says. It is the path of greatest gain. That adds a whole different perspective. And I am not trying to pretend it has caused me to live perfectly holy. I only wish that were the case. But it has been changing my perspective on obedience. It is making me want to do what God says when it is hard to do, for more **positive** reasons and less **negative** reasons.

And the other thing is that I can see more clearly how much **I rip myself off** when I disobey God. I could have had a reward for eternity. The opportunity I had was for something **good**. But I spent it foolishly and sinfully and I allowed **sin to deceive me**. I allowed the flesh, or the devil, or the world to rob me of **giving my Savior glory** and of **giving me an eternal benefit**.

Do you get angry when other believers seem to live faithlessly? Does it tick you off that they do not need to do the hard things in **their lives** that you need to do **in yours**? Does it bother you that there seems to be no bad repercussion for their faithless decisions and attitudes? Does it get under your skin that they were able to do those things that **you were forbidden to do** and there seemed to be no consequence? We are seeing that all wrong. Every disobedience by a believer is a cosmic rip off that they have committed against their Savior and their self. And every faithful obedience by a Christian is masterpiece of eternal investment that they do for their Savior and their self.

Every disobedience by a believer is a cosmic rip off. And every faithful obedience by a Christian is masterpiece of eternal investment.

This changes our perspective in life. If we believe what God says about eternal reward, we no longer live asking **what can I get away with** that I will not be punished for. We live by asking **how can I best glorify my Lord and Master**? How can I give glory to His name? What can I do that will best please Him? And we do it knowing this thing is also in **our** best interest.

So can we get away with sinning in this life? Can we do it and not lose our salvation? Can we do it and God might not even discipline us? Maybe. Maybe that is true. But can we do it and reap the same benefit in eternity that obedience will have? No. Never. It will never happen.

So John is telling us in our text to **walk just as Christ walked**. We are to walk Coram Deo. We are to walk in the presence of God. We are to walk trusting that what God has for us is always, every time, no exceptions, the best for us for eternity. And that every other alternative is a rip off designed to distract us or ruin us.

We are to walk realizing that what we do each moment matters. Our decisions are significant because they are done in the presence of God. We are to walk making the most of our time realizing that our time and the world's time is short. We are to walk like Jesus did, living each moment for the glory of the Father.

How would that change this week? Consider that. If we were to do that for a week, what changes would it make in our lives?

Moving on...

⁷ Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.

⁸ Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.

First I want to add something about these tests of our faith that John is giving us. There are two ways that we can **see** and **apply** these tests. First we can see them as ways that **fellowship is hindered or fostered**. For example here we see that love **fosters** fellowship and hatred **hinders** fellowship. And to the degree that we lean one way or the other, to that degree we will affect fellowship. These things are true and they can help guide us into the best paths to **foster** fellowship and to avoid **harming** fellowship.

At the same time, these things truly are **tests** of whether we are a believer or not. So if we find ourselves solidly on the side of loving our brothers, even at great expense to our person, we can have confidence that we are in Christ. If we fall on the side of despising a person we have reason to believe is a believer, we have great reason to doubt our salvation.

Both of these approaches are helpful in applying what John is teaching us.

Ok we have an old commandment and a new commandment. How can we understand the difference? Look in verse 8. **which thing is true in Him and in you.**

OK, so we have an old commandment that has stayed the same. And we have a commandment that has changed. Kainos is the Greek word used here for new. It means something that is fresh in essence and quality. In verse 7 John writes that this is not something fresh in essence and quality and then in 8 he says that it is fresh in essence and quality. Now how can both be true?

So we have to answer 2 questions.

How is love an old commandment?

How is love a new commandment?

Let's answer the first question first.

How is love an old commandment?

Leviticus 19:17-18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.

18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

So it was an **old** command in that love was commanded by God in God's people in the Old Testament law.

We see here that God very clearly prohibited hate and commanded love. As we New Testament Christians go back to the Old Testament law, we find that there is nothing new about God commanding people to love Himself first and then people second. It was new when God commanded it of His people, maybe 6000 years ago. But it was not new once He did. And we are told a number of things that we are not to do. Then the law expands on these points and again, mostly telling us what not to do to each other. So no one could say that the New Testament is the first time the topic of loving other human beings comes up in the Bible. God has always demanded that. So there is nothing new with the command to love one another.

OK. Then what is new about this commandment.

First we can see a difference in **degree** between the old commandment and the new.

First we have a **clear example** to follow by someone who **lived in our skin**.

The example of Christ upped the ante on loving one another. Before this time we may have gotten the idea that loving each other was simply **going by the law** that God laid down. If there are poor that need fed, go by the law and leave them some excesses on the outside of the field. If a sister in law has no heirs, it is your job to give her some. Go by the law and you will be loving your brothers and sisters.

But Jesus did something that the law did not cover. It was beyond what the law demanded. No one was required to give their lives to cover the sins committed by a countryman. There was nothing in the law like that. There were animal sacrifices of lambs and goats. But no human was required by the law to give His life for the needs of others. In that way Jesus carried this out in a very new way. And that is the **foundation of the way** that John is commanding. That is empowering and demonstrating the new commandment. We can no longer restrict the limits to our loving by the law's technicalities. Now we have an example to follow of **sacrificial love** and we are called to **follow** that example. That is the new **standard** of love we are to go by. Jesus spent all He had to meet our need. Now we are to be willing to sacrifice what **we have** to meet **other's needs**.

Christ spent everything to meet the need of the beloved. The law did not require that of the old testament believers. But Christ does require that of us.

So is it **new** that we are supposed to love people? **No**. But is it new **HOW** we are supposed to love people? **Yes**. So we have a new example for us to see exactly what God is talking about when He commands us to love. We cannot say **we don't know** what love is. And we cannot say that **we have not experienced the benefits of that love** if we are His.

Second we can see a difference in **empowerment** between the Old Testament command and Jesus's command.

It is one thing to tell a person that they must do something. It is another to empower and incentivize them to do it.

When I started my new position on the help desk for the company I work for, I was given tasks to do. But I did not have access to the tools I needed in order to do the tasks. So it didn't matter how much I wanted to do a good job. I was incapable of it.

The Old Testament told God's people that they needed to love their fellow countrymen. But they were not given what **we have been given** in the New Testament by Christ to carry out the job.

We will jump ahead in our text to make a point and then we will come back to it again later.

⁹ He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.

¹⁰ He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

¹¹ But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Look at this closely. There are two problems with the one who hates his brother. **He** is in **darkness**. And **darkness** is in **Him**. He is in a realm that **has no light**. And even if he was enveloped in light, he has **no capacity** to see it. He is in darkness. There is no light **outside** of him. He is blind. There is no light **inside** of him. That is the state of the lost person. We could tell that person that he needs to see. We could tell him over and over again. But it would do no good. Something must happen that will **enable him to see**. And he must be placed into a **realm where there is light** so he has something that can be seen. He has darkness on the outside and darkness on the inside and both need changed.

The New Testament is full of this kind of imagery.

Colossians 1:13 (NKJV)

¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 1 pet 2:9

John 8:12 (NKJV)

¹² Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

2 Corinthians 5:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer.

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

The description of salvation is that we were born under the realm of sin and we were completely blind and dead spiritually. There was death on the outside and death on the inside. But Christ moved upon us and we responded to that call because now we could see and were placed into the Kingdom of Light. We are now IN CHRIST instead of IN SIN. And now we are a new person who can see and experience the new realm we are in.

So when Christ said

John 13:34-35 (NKJV)

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

³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

He was saying this to people who could now **do it**. They had been **spiritually empowered** to do it. We are new people in a new realm and we have no excuse for not acting congruently with those changes.

A third consideration of the newness of the command is the **scope** of this love commanded.

Think about the Old Testament. Where do you see God ask anyone to sacrifice their lives for those who are mostly enemies of God, or at least come from the enemy's camp? Jonah comes to mind. But remember why Jonah ran? It was not because he was afraid the people would **kill him**. It was because he was afraid they would **repent**. He didn't think his life was in danger for those foreigners.

Hosea might be the best example. He was asked to choose a path the he knew would cause pain for himself. In fact many of the prophets sacrificed their lives for the truth. But they were usually ministering to God's chosen people. Christ did something very different. He came carrying a worldwide salvation. He came to seek and to save sinners across the whole globe and He was willing **to die** to do so.

This has always been **God's love**. It is the kind of love God has. But it has not always been God's command for us to love. But now it is our command to obey due to Christ.

These believers were to love fellow believers from all walks of life. The people to be loved may come from competing armies. They may be from groups of races that have historically hated each other. They may come from families that were feuding. This love will need to cross all racial and sociological barriers. So that might be seen as being something new.

So John can truthfully say, I am giving you an **old** command. And I am giving you a **new version** of an old command.

As I studied our text this morning, the sermon expanded to cover 2 weeks. So next week we will hear part 2.

I hope that we, together, will apply what we saw this morning by living in an even greater awareness that **we walk in the presence of God**, and He is a God who **loves and rewards** His children. Every act can be lived out as a living sacrifice for our Lord and King. And by so doing we are acting like geniuses regarding eternal investments.

Will we take on this challenge of loving our brothers and sisters even more sacrificially based on this idea that we live in the presence of God?