

1 John Chapter 2C

Throughout the years, a number of people have sat across the desk from me and voiced deep concerns, even fears and doubts regarding their salvation.

- The trials, hardships, and tragedies that invade our lives sometimes raise doubts about the sovereign grace of God.
- Chronic illness and unanswered prayer can lead some to question the promises that are contained in God's Word.
- Very often, the ongoing battle with remaining sin wreaks havoc in the hearts of those who are still growing in their understanding of the Gospel.

You may find yourself in one of those categories this morning; the circumstances of life OR your own behavior have left you questioning the reality of your salvation.

It is my prayer that our studies in this First Epistle of John will give you a greater understanding of the Gospel and provide you with the assurance of your salvation.

Remember, John's stated purpose for writing this Epistle, found in 1 John 5: 13 **I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.**

- Throughout this letter John provides a series of tests that are uniquely designed to separate the sheep from the goats, the wheat from the tares.
- For those who truly believe, these tests will help to confirm the reality of their salvation. Let me illustrate.

Last year my wife was stricken with a fairly debilitating illness. She suffered for a couple of days before I drove her to the doctor's office. All of the symptoms pointed to the flu. While we were in the office, the doctor performed a test, a nasal swab that confirmed, sure enough it was the flu.

- We were both very familiar with the symptoms but the test actually confirmed the presence of the virus.

So let me ask, what are the symptoms of true Christianity? Is there a test that we could take that would provide conclusive evidence of the presence of a new heart?

Is there a test designed to confirm the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit?

- Like the ultrasound of a pregnant woman, that reveals the presence of a new heart beating deep within, these tests reveal the wonderful work of God in creating New Life Within.

As I said last week, the Tests contained in 1 John are like three colorful threads that run throughout the tapestry of this Epistle. They are the test of truth, the test of morals and the test of love. OR we might call them the test of Doctrine, the test of Ethics and the test of Relationship.

Last week we considered what I labeled the moral test, the test of obedience that John clearly stated in verses 3. “by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.” (1 John 2:3)

- True Believers live their lives in ongoing obedience to the commands of Christ because they have received from God a new heart that is designed for joyful compliance. Remember from the book of Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 36: 26 **And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.**

27 **And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.**

- So it is that our ongoing obedience, imperfect as it is, serves as evidence of our salvation.

This morning AS we move on to verses 7-11 we come to another test, here we encounter the test of relationship or we might call it the test of love.

1 John 2: 9 **Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.**

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

- A life that is characterized by Brotherly affection is a life that is lived in the light. As we abide in a living union with Christ, his love abides in us and expresses itself in our relationships with one another.

Simply reading through the Bible in your daily devotions you can't help but notice the preeminence of love.

When God revealed his glory to Moses on Mount Sinai He declared:

Exodus 34:6b, **"The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin,**

- God desiring to display the glory of his manifold perfections before his servant Moses revealed the abundance of His steadfast love.
- It stands to reason then that those who are called into a covenant relationship with God; those he has rescued from slavery to sin should love Him in return.

Deuteronomy 6: 4 **"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.**

- A genuine love for God, throughout the Bible is expressed in a genuine love for God's children. Turn with me to the Book of Leviticus.

Leviticus 19: 17 "You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

- These ancient commands to love were expounded upon by the Lord Jesus in both word and deed when he walked among us.

The Pharisees asked, Matthew 22:36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 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. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

The Apostle Paul showed the same preeminence of Love in his address to the splintered, immature group of believers who were living in the city of Corinth.

1 Corinthians 13,1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

- And so it is that the assurance of our salvation is NOT found in the occasional exercise of supernatural gifts but in the sacrificial, benevolent love that springs continually from a renewed heart.

Well John told us in Vs. 3-6, that true believers will obey the commands of the Lord, Now in verses 7-11 He focuses on Jesus' command to Love one another.

John 13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

John expounds on Jesus' command to love showing:

- Love as an Old Command
- Love as a New Command
- Love as a way of Life

1 Love as an Old Commandment.

John 2: 7 Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.

- Six times in this letter, John addresses his readers as "Beloved," and the words of his address are not the insincere platitudes of someone who hopes to gain something from his readers.
- Rather, by this simple, heartfelt greeting John exemplifies the brotherly affection that he is holding forth as the benchmark of true salvation.

By calling this an old commandment, John assures his friends that he is not urging them to yield to some new revelation that they had never heard before. Like the new revelations that were being promoted by the False Teachers.

- On the contrary, this is a very old commandment that they have heard continually from the very beginning when the Gospel was first proclaimed to them.
- IN this letter, John points his readers back to the original message they heard when they first believed, the Gospel of their salvation.
- As we WILL SEE when we get to the third chapter the command to love one another actually accompanied the command to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 John 3: 23 **And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.**

- So you see this command to love is an Old Command, the same commandment that John's readers had heard from the very beginning.
- Moving on to verse 8 it appears on the surface, that John contradicts himself. In verse 7 he said **I am not writing you a new commandment** and then in verse 8 he says, **At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you,**
- Was John confused? Is he getting senile in his old age? Not at all. He is going to show us that the old command was made fresh and new by the advent of Jesus Christ. And so we move on to "Love as a New Commandment"

2 Love as a New Command

1 John 2: 8 **At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.**

- One of the keys to understanding John's play on words, here in verses 7-8, is found in the specific word that he used for "NEW." **it is a new commandment that I am writing to you**
- You see, in the original language there are a couple of words that can be translated "NEW." (NEOS – which speaks of new with respect to time)
- But John uses the word (KAINOS – which describes something that is fresh or new in quality, something that is new in kind or form)

While the commandment of God to love can be traced all the way back to the Old Testament Law, In Christ the Old Commandment has been made fresh, robust and new in quality.

The command to love That came through Moses as part of the holiness regulations in the book of Leviticus, was a command that was impossible to fulfill because man was dead in sin. His heart was as cold as a stone in the middle of winter.

- And then came the fullness of the revelation of God's love in Jesus Christ.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- Jesus came and walked among us, He lived a perfect life of love and in that love He gave himself as the only atoning sacrifice for our sins.

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

- John will tell us that the Newness of the command is not found in the words themselves but in the love of God that was expressed in Jesus Christ.
- This is what John means when he says this new command to love “is true in him”
- In Christ the old command to love is made fresh and new. Never before had perfect love been so clearly or brilliantly manifested as it was in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

And while there are numerous places in the Gospels where the love of Christ is brilliantly displayed, my absolute favorite is found in John 13, where Jesus gathers with his Disciples to celebrate the final Passover meal. Listen to John’s words:

John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

- NIV – He showed them the full extent of his love.
- All of the preparations for the feast of Passover were completed, Jesus and his disciples gathered together in the upper room.
- Luke tells us that a dispute arose among the disciples concerning which of them was the greatest. (*jockeying for positions of prominence around the table*)
- Then Jesus Got up, filled a basin with water and began washing the disciple’s feet. Through his humble service he taught them how to love one another.
- To love is to serve, true love considers others better than oneself.

Like the most extravagant of Hors D’oeuvres this act of loving service was only the appetizer in this feast of love the disciples experienced that precious night.

- Throughout their lives, these Jewish men participated in numerous Passover Feasts BUT on this night Jesus gave the ritual a whole new meaning.

Matthew 26: 27 took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

- Having loved his own he now showed them the full extent of his love! He told them of his impending death and resurrection. He said he was returning to the father but not to worry, because he would send another comforter who would be with them forever.
- When the meal was finished on that sacred night Jesus said to his disciples:

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Now, after revealing the depth of love that would take him to the cross, after instituting the Lord's Table which would be an ongoing remembrance of his love, Jesus turned to his disciples and said:

.John 13: 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

- The command to love one another which was impossible in the flesh is NOW made possible through the work of Christ.
- The true light that gives light to every man has come into the world and the darkness of sin is passing away. John writes:

1 John 2: 8C darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

- The darkness is passing away because the true light has begun to shine. The true light here is best understood to refer to the Lord Jesus himself.
- Today the evidence of that new light can be seen in the church as believers display the fruit of love for one another.
- In his Gospel, John writes:

John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

- Even now, the light of Christ continues to shine in the lives of the redeemed. With every soul that is delivered from the dominion of darkness, that darkness fades away and the true light shines more and more brilliantly.

Let me ask you this morning:

IS the light of Christ shining in your life? Is the Love of Christ expressed through YOU in such a way that men will know that You are His Disciple? We have seen the Old Command made fresh and new in Christ NOW we come to our final point, Love as a way of life.

3 Love as a way of Life

1 John 9 Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.

10 Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. 11 But whoever 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.

Here in verses 9–11 John applies the test of love to those who claim to believe.

In light of the evidence that He has provided from both the Old and New Covenants John upholds the standard of love as a true barometer of our union with Christ.

- Once again John is targeting the hypocritical False teachers, those who claim to have fellowship with God and yet continually walk in darkness.

These false teachers arrogantly claimed to possess a superior knowledge of the divine nature. They said they enjoyed intimate communion with God.

- But when you look at their lives, instead of love, there was lust; instead of humility there was a proud disdain for the people they considered to be “Unenlightened.”

John tells us Not only that they walk in darkness, which is a general reference to sin BUT he identifies their sin by saying they continually, habitually (**present active verb**) they continually HATE their fellow believers.

- And this hatred proves that they remain in the darkness, bound by the depravity of their sin.

As we have seen throughout this Epistle John loves to utilize comparisons and illustrations to make his point more clear. In verse 10 he says:

1 John 2:10 **Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.**

- Whoever loves (continually) his brother abides, REMAINS in the light and there is no cause for stumbling.
- Living in open, humble fellowship with God, basking in the light of his love, renewing our minds by the Word of God, PREACHING THE Gospel to ourselves on a regular basis, confessing our faults one to another; in all of these things we abide in the light and there is no cause for stumbling.
- Let me illustrate.

When you walk your two beagles around the yard in the full light of the noonday, sun there is no cause for stumbling. (*you can easily see where you are stepping*) BUT when you take them out before bedtime and you walk them around the yard and the flood light suddenly blows out AND you realize, you are in your bear feet and you have not cleaned up the yard in 4 days, now you can't see anything. All of a sudden the yard turns into a virtual mine field with multiple opportunities for stumbling (**if you know what I mean**)

For those of us who believe, the Word of God has become a light to our path and a lamp to our feet. And the Holy Spirit teaches us from the Word how to walk in Love.

- Reading the book of Romans the Holy Spirit addresses the sincerity of our love.

Romans 12: 9 **Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.**

10 **Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.**

- The word Genuine could be rendered Unhypocritical. See you can't fake love!

O, you may be able to put on a good face Sunday morning, BUT squeeze 11 people in a 7 passenger van driving through the backroads of Guatemala for 3 hours and the reality of your love will be tested.

- In a similar manner John writes:

1 John 3:18 **Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.**

19 **By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him;**

- True Christian Love requires much more than words.
- When your brother is suffering a great need do you send him away saying, be fed, be warm, be clothed OR do you actually sacrifice your own resources in order to meet his needs?

Of course this kind of love will force you to leave your comfort zone and enter into the unfamiliar world of someone else's life.

- But, isn't that what Jesus did? He left behind the glory of heaven where he existed eternally with the Father and came to this sin-ravaged world.
- (non-smoker in an elevator filled with people who were smoking)
- Paul addressed a relationship issue between two women in the Philippian church by pointing them to the humility of Christ and all he left behind to SAVE us.

Philippians 2: 1 **So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.**

3 **Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.**

5 **Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

- In the 1980's Tina Turner asked the question, "What's Love Got to do with it?"
- When it comes to our salvation, love has everything to do with it!
- In Love He put on human flesh, In love He obeyed the Father perfectly. In love he bore the punishment for the sin of the elect, In love he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven where he sent the Holy Spirit to apply the benefits of his sacrifice to all of God's beloved children.
- In love he intercedes for those who are being saved.