

Subject: *Straight Talk about Love*

Scripture: *1 John 2:7-17*

In school we had classes in required subjects and then we had other classes called electives. In this letter John is teaching required subjects in the Christian life, and he is giving us tests as we go along. If we claim to be a Christian, we will pass the tests. So far, John has given us three tests. The first test was on the person of Christ. The second test was the truth about sin. The third test was on obedience. And now the fourth test is on love.

We notice once again that John's approach to love, as with other subjects, is black and white. There is the contrast of light and darkness and the contrast of loving the world and loving the Father. In this straight talk about love we find three areas of concern.

1. Love for Our Brother (vs. 7-11)

This is the love God requires, love for our brother. Notice two things here: the commandment itself and the contrast between those who obey this command and those who don't. We are commanded to love one another. It is an old commandment in one sense and it is a new commandment in another sense. "From the beginning" refers to the beginning of their Christian life." The commandment to love others is nothing new.

- Old Testament law – *Leviticus 19:18* *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.*
- Christ – *Matthew 22:36-40* ³⁶ *Master, which is the great commandment in the law?* ³⁷ *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* ³⁸ *This is the first and great commandment.* ³⁹ *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* ⁴⁰ *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*
- Paul – *Romans 13:8* *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.* *1 Thessalonians 4:9* *But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.*
- James – *James 2:8* *If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.*

In what way then is it a new command? This means new not in time, but new in quality. *John 13:34-35* 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.* It is the sacrificial love that Jesus showed to us and it is the same love that flows through us (vs. 8, "which thing is true in Him and in you"). As believers we now have the ability to love others as we should. It is a supernatural kind of love, as the poet reminds us: "To live above with those we love; O, that will be glory. But to dwell below with those we know, now that's a different story."

- *Romans 5:5* *And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*
- *Galatians 5:22* *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith...*

John then states the obvious contrast between someone who claims to be a Christian but doesn't love his brother. He is walking in darkness. The Christian who loves his brother is living in the light. Remember in this epistle light is a symbol of truth and holiness and darkness is a symbol of falsehood and evil. Love for our brother and sister is a sure test of salvation.

Sometimes a person will say, "Well I love him, but I don't like him." What if God said that about you? What would John think about a statement like that? He would say, "Come on, get real." See 1 John 3:13-14. We should not be surprised if the world doesn't love us, but we should be shocked if we don't love one another.

2. Love for Our Father (vs. 12-14)

Whereas love for our brother is the love God requires, this is the love God deserves, love for our Father. John speaks of three levels of spiritual growth (children, young men, and fathers). Children are new, immature believers who have little experience or discernment. Young men are growing and developing in their walk, and they are enjoying victory over Satan. Fathers are mature believers who know the Lord on a deeper and richer level.

Two things can be said of believers: 1) they know God personally, and 2) they overcome Satan through the truth of God's Word in them. What a tremendous blessing to be in God's family and to experience these blessings.

Believers on all three levels are in God's family. Our level of spiritual growth does not affect our position in God's family. God loves us the same, and He deserves our love in return. We love Him because He first loved us.

3. Love for the World (vs. 15-17)

While love for our brother is the love God requires, and love for our Father is the love God deserves, this is the love God hates, love for the world. When John speaks of the world he is not talking about the planet or the people, but he is talking about the powerful system that drives this world. It is the invisible system dominated by Satan that stands opposed to God, His Word, and His people. The world and all it offers (its philosophy, its values, its activities) may be attractive, but it is deceptive, disappointing, demonic, and ultimately it is deadly.

- ***Ephesians 2:1-2**¹ And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;² Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*
- ***James 4:4** ... know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*

Evangelist Bud Robinson saw New York City for the first time and that night in his hotel room he prayed: "Lord, thank You for letting me see the big city, but Lord, most of all I thank You that I didn't see anything I wanted." John says if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, that is, he is not a believer. If you're driving your car and the check engine light comes on, you can either ignore it or pay attention to it. God is warning us in these verses.

We live in the world, but we're not part of the world system and we don't love the world. **John 17:14** *I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* All that the world offers is not from God. The world has three things on the menu: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The world appeals to the flesh (the sin nature of man). The world appeals to the eyes. The world appeals to the pride of life (the desire to impress others or feel important).

- **Genesis 3:6** *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

We don't love the world for two reasons: 1) where it comes from and 2) where it is going. Anybody who lives for this world is in the junk business.

Do you love your brothers and sisters in Christ? Do you love your Heavenly Father?
Do you love the world?