

Significance of Love

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[0:00] We're actually going to pick up with a lesson that we would have covered last week had we've been here. So we'll do some review of what we covered last time before we get into! new material. Remember last time we covered 1 John 2 verses 3 through 6 and John reminded! us about the significance of a life.

And those who obey God's word give evidence that they are genuine believers. And obedience then is another way to tell whether our faith is real. So let's read 1 John 2, 3 through 6 and we'll do some of that review.

1 John 2, 3 through 6 says, Now by this we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He who says, I know him and does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in him. He who says, he abides in him, ought himself also to walk just as he walked.

So verse 3 has the test for us. And we know that we know him if we keep his commandments. Then in verses 4 and 5, John recaps the truth. Someone who claims to know Jesus but fails to keep those commandments is a liar. But for the person who does keep Jesus' commandments, that person demonstrates love for God and Jesus. So look at the last sentence of 1 John 2, 5 again. It says, By this we know that we know him. So in him is an example of John's theology of eminence. It's talking about the Christian in God and Jesus and Jesus in God and the Christian, God and Jesus in each other.

[1:48] And the concept can be found 35 times in the Gospel and John's epistles. He uses it in phrases like to be in or to abide or to remain in. And so when one is born of God, he's been begotten into an intimate relationship with each member of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And it's the keeping of commandments then that bears witness to this union. Then verse 6 included another in him phrase and it gave us the tendency of the true believer.

Verse 6 said, He who says he abides in him ought himself also to walk just as he walked. And there we talked about the word abide meaning to remain or stay around.

And this remaining is evidence that salvation has already taken place. And the fruit or the evidence of the salvation is continuing to walk in him and in service to his teaching.

So Jesus' life of obedience then is the Christian's pattern. Those who claim to be Christians ought to live just as he did because they possess his Spirit's presence and power in their lives.

[2:54] So instead of patterning their lives after Jesus because they have to, true believers pattern their lives after Jesus because they want to. The Christian as a child of God ought to obey God because of a sincere desire to do so.

And it should be a joy to follow in the footsteps of the one who died for us. So that brings us back to verse 3 again that said, Now by this we know that we know him if we keep his commandments. And to keep those commandments we must know what they are. And in tonight's new material, John is going to talk about one of those commandments. And 1 John 2, 7-11 tell us about the significance of love.

So let's go ahead and read verses 7-11 now. John says, 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. 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.

[3:58] He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

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. Verses 7 and 8 sound a bit confusing when we first read them, because John says he is writing no new commandment.

Then John says he is writing a new commandment. But nowhere in verses 7 and 8 does he actually say what the commandment is. Of course, you know what the commandment is based upon the title of the lesson, but we will also sort this out as we go through the verses.

So in verse 7, we see the oldness of love. The oldness of love. So he says, 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 have heard from the beginning. So we can easily see that John is talking about an old commandment here, but we have to go to 2 John to see what that old commandment is.

[5:08] So listen to 2 John verses 5 and 6. 2 John verses 5 and 6 say this, They say, And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I write a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.

This is love, that we walk according to his commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it. So notice he says there that we should walk according to his commandments, just like he says in 1 John.

But in 2 John he actually says this is the commandment. And that commandment then is to love one another. And this message can be characterized as old or from the beginning because it has roots in the Mosaic law.

Listen to Leviticus 19.18. Leviticus 19.18 is where God says, You shall not take vengeance nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, that you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the Lord. Then if you go to the New Testament, Paul says this in Romans 13.8-10. Paul says, Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves has fulfilled the law.

[6:23] For the commandments, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, you shall not covet, and if there is any other commandment, all are summed up in this saying, namely, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Love does no harm to a neighbor, therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. So here's that last part again from Romans. Romans 9b there says, If there is any other commandment, all are summed up in this saying, namely, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Love does no harm to a neighbor, therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law. And back in 1 John, John says that we've had this commandment from the beginning.

When he's talking about from the beginning there, he's referring to the beginning of their Christian lives. And we'll see that as we get further into 1 John. And this was part of the ethical instruction that they received from the very day of their salvation.

There's always the danger of drifting away from what we know from the beginning. So really, John is saying, get back to the beginning, and you'll remember what's true. John reemphasized the importance of getting back to the beginning in the last sentence of verse 7 as well.

[7:40] That last sentence says, The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. So in the previous sentence of the verse, John said we've had the commandment since the beginning. And now he says that we've heard this commandment from the beginning.

So when he's talking about the message you have heard, he very likely means the message that he or other apostles had already taught them. And of course, we have the benefit of hearing this same command from other parts of Scripture.

We've already covered how Paul wrote about the commandment to love in Romans 13, 8-10. But listen to what James says in James 2, 8. James 2, 8 says, If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, you do well.

And then here's what Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2, 17. 1 Peter 2, 17 says, Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. So you can see it really is an old commandment.

It goes all the way back to the Mosaic Law, and then it carries through the New Testament with all of the apostles. So that brings us to the second section of the lesson.

[8:49] We've seen the oldness of love. In verse 8, we see the newness of love. So let's talk about the newness of love next. Verse 8 says, 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.

So that seems like a contradictory statement at first, because John says the old commandment is also new. But the old commandment is new in at least three ways. And the commandment of love is new in the sense that it's seen in Jesus and established by him through his death and resurrection. Listen to Ephesians 5.2. Paul writes there, And walk in love, as Christ has loved us, and given himself for us, and offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

The command is also new, because Jesus' obedience fulfilled the whole law and gave it a new depth of meaning that it never had known before. Listen to Jesus' own words in John 13, 34 and 35. Jesus says, A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

[10 : 12] So Jesus himself refers to it as a new commandment, because he gave it a new standard. Remember that Moses said, Love your neighbor as yourself. That's what we ran in Leviticus 19.18.

Jesus said the new standard is to love your neighbor as Jesus has loved us. That's quite a bit different than what we had before. So love then is to serve as the distinguishing characteristic of discipleship.

When you think about it, Christians' love and support for one another enables them to survive in a hostile world. Jesus was the embodiment of God's love, so now each disciple should embody that Christ's love in themselves and share that love with others.

So this love then is assigned to the world as well as to every believer that we really are Christians. Then the third way this command is new is because for those who believe, it makes possible a new and eternal life which they are motivated by the grace of God to fulfill with self-sacrificing Christ-like love.

So in other words, that eternal life that we have gives us the ability to truly fulfill the law of self-sacrificing love. So because of what Christ has done for us, we can express that type of love.

[11 : 31] Later on in 1 John, John will tell us these words in 1 John 3.16. He says, By this we know love, because he laid down his life for us, and we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

So our lives then should be a continual blessing to other believers. And according to 1 John 3.16, we should be willing to die for them if necessary. Of course, most of us will never be required to die on behalf of others, but every one of us can manifest brotherly love by sharing our material things with those in need.

So the true test of a Christian's love then is his willingness to sacrifice for the sake of his brother. So we can sum up the newness of love like this. The command to love is new because of how Jesus elevated it.

So it's new because of how Jesus elevated it. It's also new because of how Jesus has demonstrated it. So not only did Jesus elevate it, he demonstrated it.

And then finally, it's new because of how Jesus has enabled such love in us. So once again, the command to love is new because of how Jesus has elevated it, because of how Jesus has demonstrated it, and because of how Jesus has enabled such love in us.

[12 : 51] So let's move on to the next phrase of verse 8. John says this new commandment of love is true in him and in you. Notice that he repeats the in before both you and him.

He says in him and in you. And it implies that the love commandment finds its realization separately because first it did so in him, and then it did so in us because we now walk as he walked.

But the commandment also finds its realization conjointly because believers are joined with Christ. So in other words, having first been fulfilled in Christ, it's now fulfilled in us through his spirit in us.

And his spirit in us then enables us to love. So said another way, the commandment of love can be fulfilled in us because Jesus first fulfilled it, and like I said, his spirit then enables us to fulfill it.

At the end of verse 8, John tells us he writes the new commandment because darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

[13 : 53] So John contrasts the darkness where there is confusion and no understanding of God's love and revelation with the light where individuals can have fellowship with God and really understand his revelation.

So the command to love which Jesus and his followers exhibit belongs to the new age of righteousness which has begun to dawn. And Christ's incarnation brought a new light into the world which will never be able to be extinguished.

And the love he manifested and taught his disciples to manifest is characteristic of the age to come. So it's the darkness of the present world and all its hatred which is destined to disappear forever. So John gave the terms light and darkness slightly different from what they had in chapter 1. There he said that light was defined in terms of the fundamental character of God because he said God is light in 1.5.

In that sense, the light's been shining as long as there's been a revelation of God to man. But here, John is talking about the incarnation of Christ as the point at which the light really began to shine.

[14:57] So the new age has dawned and its true character can now be defined in a special revelation of God through Jesus Christ, his Son. So above all, that revelation is the revelation of divine love.

And through the love that Christians can show for one another, we demonstrate to the world that the light which Jesus brought into the world continues to shine in the darkness. So we've seen the oldness of love.

We've seen the newness of love. Finally, we'll see the importance of love in verses 9 through 11. So let's move on and look at the importance of love.

Verses 9 through 11 say, He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 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. So we'll take those verses one at a time starting with verse 9.

[16:00] Verse 9 says, He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness until now. This warning is clearly intended for professed Christians as the words his brother plainly show.

The original language conveys the idea of someone who habitually hates or is marked by a lifestyle of hate. Those who profess to be Christians that are characterized by hate demonstrate by their actions that they really have never been born again.

Remember that John was dealing with false teachers and these false teachers made claims to enlightenment and they claimed to have transcendent knowledge of God and salvation. But their actions, especially the lack of love, proved all such claims false.

And we'll also see that when we get to verse 11. So this section picks up the theme of light that John had used in previous verses to describe the inauguration and consummation of the kingdom of God.

And it also draws from the terminology of chapter 1 where God is described as light and the believers are encouraged to walk in the light. So notice the progression in chapter 2.

[17:09] In 2.3, John wrote about knowing God. In 2.6, John wrote about abiding in Him. And now John writes about living in the light. So the believer who walks in the light shares a special intimacy with God through the work of Jesus Christ.

And the believer shares the very eternal life of God. So to walk in the light then is to live out the life of God. The believer then gives evidence by the abiding union in the light because he meets the challenge and opportunity to develop Christian character and conduct that's in step with his confession and then the command of love.

So in other words, when we live out the command to love, we give evidence that we really are a child of God. So if we do hate another Christian, that means something is radically wrong with our confession of faith.

Some believers' manners and habits will be objectionable to us and some believers will have certain habits that we even disapprove of. That's understandable and that's just the way things are going to be in this life.

But to hate them reveals that we are in darkness. So does that mean that a true believer will never have moments where he temporarily hates another believer? I heard a few no's out there and you're correct.

[18:27] The opinion held by some is that a true Christian can never hate another Christian, but that's naive and contrary to what the Bible says. It's also contrary to our own experience because biblical history provides examples of how believers in the true God sometimes acted like unbelievers in their attitudes and actions.

For example, think about King David. He was guilty of murder, which of course is the ultimate expression of hate. But we can no longer harbor hatred and say that we walk with God.

So if the Christian has a proper relationship with the Christ of love, then he'll love his brother. So to fully grasp John's point here, remember that the word translated hate carries the idea of someone who habitually hates.

And that's the real key. If you have any doubt about that, look at the last phrase of verse 9. John says that person is in darkness until now. So if someone professes to be a Christian and yet habitually hates those that are Christians, the man continues to be what he always was.

And so in other words, he was and is unsaved. He's never been regenerated. Those who hate their brother differ from the children of God in that they're still in darkness and may even love being in that darkness.

[19:41] So the real seriousness of this situation is that the one who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is deceived. And in reality, he's a member of the kingdom of darkness. Just like we've seen elsewhere in 1 John, John is really black and white in his discussion of an individual's relationship with God because according to John, when one is either in the light or you're in the darkness, you either love your brother or you hate him.

And when someone is in the light, he's unable to love. And then the one who is in darkness has no capacity to love. And we'll see that in verse 11 because verse 11 tells us that his eyes have been blinded by the darkness.

Just a while ago, we mentioned how King David is an example of how true believers can sin and hate fellow believers for a period of time. But he also is an example of how true believers never demonstrate habitual hatred.

If you remember Psalm 51, Psalm 51 is the psalm that David wrote after the prophet Nathan confronted David about his sins. And listen to David's words in the first three verses of Psalm 51. David said, Have mercy upon me, O God, according to your loving kindness, according to the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.

[20:58] Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin, for I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is always before me. And later on in Psalm 51, David writes these words in verses 12 through 17.

He says, Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me by your generous spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners shall be converted to you. Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of your righteousness. O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall show forth your praise, for you did not desire sacrifice or else I would give it. You do not delight in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart.

These, O God, you will not despise. So listen to verse 17 one more time. It says, The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart.

These, O God, you will not despise. So do these verses sound like they were written by somebody who had a pattern of habitual hatred? David actually recognized his sin, realized what he'd done wrong, and repented for that.

[22:09] And so he made terrible mistakes. And of course, by murdering a fellow believer, he expressed the ultimate hatred, but he lacked the habitual hatred that characterizes unbelievers.

And hatred, then, is a kind of internal stumbling block which can relieve disastrous spiritual falls. But the calamities to which hatred leads are avoided by the one who loves his brother. And we see that in verse 10.

Look at verse 10. It says, He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. So the pronouns he and him there in verse 10 refer to the loving Christian.

And that person does not cause his brother to commit sin. And him can also be translated it. So meaning that the light provides an environment which helps the Christian avoid committing sin.

Matthew Henry described verse 10 like this. He says, A Christian sees the foundation and reason of Christian love. He discerns the weight and value of the Christian redemption. He sees how fitting it is that we should love those whom Christ hath loved.

[23:13] And the consequence will be that there is no occasion of stumbling in him. He will be no scandal, no stumbling block to his brother. He will conscientiously beware that he neither induce his brother to sin nor turn him out of the way of religion.

Christian love teaches us to highly value our brother's soul and to dread everything that will be injurious to his innocence and peace. So you can see where we're getting a little bit deeper

because to truly love then is to avoid doing things that will keep another brother from following the Lord.

We want to avoid things that might induce another brother to sin. And the Apostle Paul is an example of someone who avoided actions that could cause a fellow believer to stumble. In 1 Corinthians 8, 9-13, he wrote about Christian freedom to eat meat sacrificed to idols.

And he said that we did have the freedom to eat meat sacrificed to idols. But he also said this. Listen to 9-13. He said that, Beware, lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.

For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in another idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ has died.

[24 : 32] But when you thus sin against the brethren and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

And Paul discussed the same thought in Romans 14, 14-21. Romans 14, 14-21 say this. They say, I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself.

But to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Does the walking in love sound familiar there?

Then he goes on to say, Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. Therefore, do not let your good be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. And then Paul continues on to say, Therefore, let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

[25 : 37] Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.

So listen to Romans 14, 14 and 15 one more time. He says, I know I'm convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself, but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. So Paul is saying the same thing then that John is telling us.

We're no longer walking in love if we do something that makes a fellow believer stumble. So 1 John 2.10 says that the command to love is a difficult thing to do because when you start looking at it, it sounds easy on the surface, but it's really difficult to follow because love is more than avoiding hatred.

Love is also avoiding anything that would make a fellow believer stumble. I believe I put this quote from John Calvin in your handout. John Calvin summarized both the importance of the command to love and also how difficult it is to do.

[26 : 52] He said, The love of God teaches us to love men, and we also, in reality, prove our love to God by loving men at his command. However this may be, it remains always certain that love is the rule of life, and this ought to be the more carefully noticed because all choose rather almost anything else than this one commandment of God.

So when I first started looking at these tests that John has, I thought, well, we get the difficult ones out of the way first. We talk about the significance of sin, and then we talk about the significance of obedience, and then we could finally get to the test of love, which would be a nice, easy test.

But this actually may be the toughest one of all. So let's move on to verse 11 now. Verse 11 expands on verse 9, And in 1 John 2.11, John wrote, 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.

So those who hate their brothers live in a state of darkness where there is an absence of love and then by definition an absence of God. In this darkness, the individual is exiled from fellowship with the Father, with Jesus, and also with the believing community.

So far from knowing God, then, those who hate their brothers walk around being confused and lost without knowing where they're going. So in other words, then, unethical behavior contradicts the claim to be a Christian.

[28 : 19] It also contributes to a spiritual downfall. Spiritual darkness, then, goes on the offensive because darkness attacks those living in it so that they become increasingly trapped in this realm of confusion and blindness.

So in a real sense, what we do is what we become and how we live then becomes who we are. So the longer we remain in the realm of darkness, the more difficult it becomes to see the sins in our lives and the less likely we are to see our need to confess our sins.

So habitual hatred, then, leads to more and more hatred and the possibility of loving becomes less and less likely. Fortunately, though, believers should be glad that we're different from those who walk in spiritual darkness because we know that we do love.

But we always should give credit to God for that as well. Listen to what Paul said in Colossians 1, 13 and 14. He said, He, meaning God, has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

So once again, he said, God has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins. And Peter put it this way in 1 Peter 2, 9.

[29 : 33] He says, But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Notice the reference to darkness and light there from Peter. And then he goes on to say, Who once were not a people, but now are the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

So once again, we can be grateful that we love, but we also have to be grateful that God has enabled that love in us. So let's consider what we can learn from tonight's passage.

The first thing then is that the command to love is both old and new. So the command to love is both old and new. It has its roots in the law, and we've heard it from the very beginning of our Christian lives.

And for those of us who were raised in Christian homes, we heard that command even before we became Christians. But Jesus took the command to an entirely different level because he said that we are to love as he has loved us.

[30 : 34] And that's why it becomes a new command, because it is a different standard. Then the second thing we can learn is that Jesus demonstrated the meaning of love through his work on the cross.

So Jesus demonstrated the meaning of love through his work on the cross. And then finally, we can learn that the Spirit of God enables this same type of love in us.

So the Spirit of God enables this type of love in us. John himself may be the best example of how living in God's light changes a person.

Flip over to Luke 9 and start with verse 51. We're going to look at a few verses out of Luke 9 here just to show us how much John has changed.

And we'll see a glimpse of the younger John in action. So in Luke 9, 51 through 54, we see this. It says, Now it came to pass, when the time had come for him, Jesus, to be received up, that he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem and sent messengers before his face.

[31 : 43] And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans to prepare for him. But they did not receive him because his face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. And when his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?

So listen to that statement from James and John again. They said, Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did? So does that sound like the apostle of love in that case?

John showed here that he was still more of a son of thunder than the apostle of love at that time.

But John clearly took the following rebuke of Jesus to heart, and that rebuke from Jesus is in verses 55 and 56 of verse 9.

It says, But he, meaning Jesus, turned and rebuked them and said, You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. That's interesting because he says, You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.

So there again, we see a contrast between light and dark. And then he goes on to say in verse 56, For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went on to another village.

[32 : 55] So Matthew Henry describes the more mature John like this. He says, Having now imbibed more of the Spirit of Christ, John breathed out good will to man and love to all the brethren.

It is the Lord Jesus that is the great master of love. It is his school, his own church, that is the school of love. His disciples are the disciples of love, and his family must be the family of love. So once again, his disciples are the disciples of love, and his family must be the family of love. And the Spirit of Christ is what enabled John to write and then live out verses like 1 John 2.10, where he said, He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. music .