

So That You May Know

An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John**

Chapter 7- The Test of Love

54. The Law of Love Part 2

WAOY Wednesday 07/18/07; WOSM Thursday 12/15/22

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1John**, and today I want to *continue* to examine what John taught about "The Law of Love". So, let's open our Bibles to **1John 2:7-11** and read those verses again together:

7 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.

8 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.

9 The one who says he is in the Light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

10 The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

11 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.

Now on the last broadcast, we saw how John linked both Light and Life to Salvation and here in these verses we see why John made that connection. John tells us here that if we do not love the brethren- we are walking in darkness. Now this has particular ramifications to us today, so I want you listen very closely to what John is saying here.

John teaches that loving the brethren is not optional. We must understand, beloved that loving those whom Jesus has saved is not a choice that we have. It isn't that some saved people love the brethren while others who are equally saved do not love the brethren. No, John

teaches here that loving the brethren is part and parcel to what it means to be saved. In other words, John is saying here that loving the brethren is what defines Salvation.

We who love the Lord in this country have an enormous obstacle to overcome that others who serve the Lord in other countries do not have. Over the last 100 years or so- we have mixed what being an American means with what being a Christian means. This mistake is what is called the Americanization of Christianity, or the Americanization of the Church and we must be careful about this issue beloved. Our loyalty must be God before Government; Christ before Country; and Biblical Truth above American ideals.

Many times, American ideals are the same as Biblical Truth. More than any other country in history- our American system promotes Biblical morality many, many times. But there are occasions when America is at odds with Scripture and there are times when our government and our country and certain American ideals are at odds with God and with Scripture. At those times, beloved- we must clear- our first loyalty is with Jesus, and we will stand with Him.

For example, there is an American ideal that we highly value called American individualism. This ideal teaches that our freedom; our ability to do what we want when we want and as we want is the highest and greatest of all American ideals. But that concept is what the Bible calls doing what is right in your own eyes and it is not a noble ideal to God- it is sin.

You see, brothers and sisters- the very essence of being a Christian is that of gracious and humble submission to the Word of God. The very essence of being lost is to follow your wicked heart and do whatever you want to. America teaches that being an individual; doing things, "my way;" living my life according to the dictates of my own heart is noble and correct and even admired.

But the Bible teaches that when we are saved- we die to ourselves; we give up our own dreams and our own personal ambitions and our own fleshly lusts and cravings and we do what Jesus did; we speak what Jesus spoke and we live as Jesus lived.

The very definition of being a Christian was summed up when John the Baptist referred to his position with Jesus in **John 3:30** and said:

He must increase, but I must decrease.

Any doctrine; any teaching; any man who teaches that we are to be made much of; or that we are to grow in importance after we are saved; or that we are to become first and the best and the greatest after we are saved is wrong and is fighting the very foundational principles of Christianity.

Christianity is all about Jesus being made much of. It is Jesus Who is the best and the brightest and the greatest. It is Jesus Who is to be the Head and it is Jesus Who is to be first and to be on top- not us.

America is great about giving people opportunity and to reward those who work hard and are blessed to be born as gifted individuals. But Christianity doesn't teach that we are to pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. No, the Bible says that whatever we have that is good is an underserved gift from a loving God to a wretched sinner and that we possess no good thing in ourselves.

American free Enterprise is a wonderful tool that rewards effort. But the very essence of Christianity is Grace- unmerited favor- that we do not deserve and that we cannot earn- no matter what we do.

The Pharisees taught a very unscriptural and cruel theological system of reward and punishment. These false teachers taught that wealthy people were highly favored by God and that poor and sick people were cursed by God.

But Jesus shattered these two myths when He told the people in **John 9** that the man who was born blind was not born that way because of any sin that he had done nor because of any sin that his parents had done and when Jesus told Peter and the rest in **Matthew 19** that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it was for a rich man to go to heaven.

Some godly people have been chosen by God to have great wealth- and that is fine- but those people are few and far between. For the most of us- we are not noble in our pursuit of great wealth- we are simply covetous. The Bible does not teach that God will reward all godly people with money and neither does the Bible teach that God punish bad people with cancer- that is simply not true. Some godly people die with horrible diseases and some evil men prosper in this life- that is a mystery but one that is clearly taught all throughout the Bible.

So, if we are to be biblical believers- we must guard our hearts that we do not simply become Americans who have justified our way of life by spiritualizing it.

In addition, those of us who live in the South have another problem to overcome besides the Americanization of Christianity and that is a type of “southern morality” which many times is looked at as being the same thing as biblical morality.

Being a “good ole boy” is not the same thing as being saved. And being polite and saying, “*Yes ma’am and no sir*” is fine but it isn’t the same thing as being a Christian. Christians are supposed to have a high moral standard- but Christianity is not moralism, beloved. Buddhists and Hindus and Mormons and even some atheists can have a high moral standard- yet that morality has nothing to do with being saved.

It is fine to wave the flag. I wave the flag. I tear up every single time the Star Spangled Banner is played. But being patriotic is not the same thing as being born again and we must say this so that the two do not get confused.

So be careful- beloved that we do not mix being an American with being a Christian- because God is not an American. God doesn’t wave our flag. God is not patriotic. God doesn’t watch the Dallas Cowboys. God is not on our side. God is not on our team. No, we must struggle, and we must work very hard so that we will be on God’s side. And if we do – God will be with us- and if we do not repent and get on God’s side- then the United States will become just the latest country added to the long list of countries who knew God and forgot Him; Who were blessed by God and spurned His Love; and Who tried to rebel against God and failed.

John says that there is a way to know if you are saved. It isn’t by praying a prayer; it isn’t by walking down the aisle. It isn’t by shaking the preacher’s hand. No, John said that there are two unmistakable ways; two undeniable facts that we can have constantly working in us whereby we can *know* that we are saved- and those two attributes are that we obey what Jesus said to do and that we love the brethren. Now I want to look very carefully at how John begins this portion of his Epistle. So, let’s examine verses 7&8 again which says:

7 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.

8 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.

Now at first John looks like he is talking out of both sides of his mouth here. In verse 7, John says that that this is *not* a new commandment, and then in verse 8 he says that loving the brethren *is* a new commandment. Well, which one is it? Is loving the brethren an old commandment or is it a new commandment? The answer is that it is both and old and a new commandment. Let me explain. First of all, the Command to love the brethren is ancient. In **Leviticus 19:18**, we read this:

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.

So clearly, we can see that God was *not* talking about our next door neighbor here, but he was talking about “**the sons of your people**”. In other words- God was addressing only the Jew- the chosen of God- in this verse. And all throughout the Old Testament, God instructed that the Jew treat the other Jews with great love and mercy and tenderness- precisely because they were the people of God.

So, when John is instructing the New Testament Church- he is giving them the very same *ancient* commandment that the people of God always had from God – that they were to love each other.

But as we are well aware- we do not have the human capacity to obey these commands from God perfectly unless and until the Holy Spirit resides within us. No human being has the ability to keep God’s Law in his own power. Obeying God is not simply a matter of will power. It isn’t that you can “make up your mind” and that in and of itself will give you what you need to obey God’s Law. No, we know that no man successfully kept God’s Law- not Moses, not Abraham, not Isaiah, not Paul, not us- not anyone.

Disobeying God’s law is what sin is and we know that the Bible clearly teaches that all men are sinners in that all men break God’s Law. John says that if any man says that he is not a sinner- he is a

liar, and the Truth is not in him. In addition to that if any man says that keeps God's law- he makes Jesus to be a liar because Jesus came and died precisely because we are sinners and we do not keep Gods' law.

So, while loving the brethren is not new and has always been a command from God to his people- no man has the ability in and of himself to keep that command without the Power of the Spirit that only comes through Salvation.

So, in that sense- in the sense that unless and until we are saved- we do not have the power or the ability or even the desire to love the brethren- this Command is new and not old.

The Command to love the brethren is "old" in the sense that it has always been required- but this same old Command is also "new" in the sense that only through Jesus do we have the Power to actually do it.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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