

## 1 John 2:7-11 Answers The New Old Commandment

**Introduction:** In 1:5-2:11, John deals with the subject of false professors versus true possessors. Four times he raises and refutes false claims of salvation. One of his goals was obviously to help his readers determine if they were really saved or not (2:6, 5:13). In doing so, John wrote in extremes: light/dark, truth/lies, love/hate.

### Review:

\*\*\*\***What is the first lie, the first false profession, John exposed (1:6)?** It is a fact that those who walk in darkness cannot be in fellowship with God. Note that truth is not to be simply believed but practiced (1:6b).

**Reality:** This (1:6) shows us that not everybody who talks about heaven is going there. There are those who say they walk with God, but in reality do not. They are either self-deceived or wolves in sheep's clothing who knowingly lie about it.

\*\*\*\***What second lie did John expose in 1:8?** The second lie of false professors is stated in 2:8 ("we have no sin"). Such people are like Little Jack Horner who said, "What a good boy am I".

A saw mill can take a crooked old tree, lop off one side, turn it over and shave off the other side, and keep so doing until they turn that crooked tree into a straight piece of lumber. But if you go around to the end and look at the grain, you'll see it is still crooked on the inside.

ESV **Matthew 23:27** . . . you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.

**What third false profession did John deal with in 2:4?** The one who says he knows God but does not keep God's commandments is a liar.

**False Assurance of Easy Believism:** Salvation is clearly by grace through faith alone. Good works do not and cannot save you. "Easy Believism" is a term used to describe the idea that a person can have genuine, saving faith but not keep Jesus' commands. According to John, a saving faith always leads to a changed life, as clearly taught here in 2:3.

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\*\*\*\***What fourth false profession did John deal with in 2:7-11?** Those who say they walk in the light and yet hate the brethren are lying; they are still in darkness, 2:9.

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\*\*\*\***1. What old commandment did they have from the beginning (2:7)?** See *Leviticus 19:18, John 13:34*. Not never explicitly stated the command. Since John went on to write about love for one's brother, this old command obviously concerns love.

There are several ways to interpret John's reference to the old command, depending on what John meant by the beginning. If John meant the beginning of Judaism, then the likely old command was Leviticus 19:18 (this assumes he wrote to Jewish believers).

ESV **Leviticus 19:18** . . . you shall love your neighbor as yourself . . .

However, John meant the beginning of Christianity, then the old command was Jesus' command that we love one another (Jn 13:34).

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

(Jesus command was new when He gave it, but old by time John repeated it to his readers.)

**Prior to 2:7, John used the word "commands" (in the plural, 2:3, 4). However, in 2:7 it is in the singular. What is the significance of this shift from the plural to the singular?** Perhaps it is because John considered all the commandments of God as being summed up in this one: to love your neighbor as yourself.

ESV **Romans 13:9-10** The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

— 2:8 —

2. In 2:8, John said the old commandment is really a new commandment. **In what sense is the old commandment also a new commandment (2:8a)?** See *John 13:14*. The reason John gave for saying the old is new is "because" (ESV) the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining (2:8b). Based on the translation in the ESV, the newness has something to do with darkness leaving and light shining. That light was waxing and darkness waning suggests the old commandment was being newly discovered by his readers; it was new in them as they experienced it, as they lived it out.

Again, Jesus Himself spoke of a "new" command:

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

Jesus repeated and renewed Moses' law of love. We are not only to love our neighbor as ourselves (old commandment), but we are to love each other as Jesus loved us (new commandment).

**3. What has John used light and dark (2:8) to represent so far in this letter?** He has used light to represent God, truth and purity and darkness to represent lies and disobedience.

— 2:9 —

\*\*\***4. What is true of him who hates his brother (2:9-11)?** Such a one is still in the dark (2:9), walks in the dark (2:11), and does not know where he is going because he is blind (2:11).

**What does it mean to hate someone (2:9)?** We typically think of hate as a feeling of anger, as a burning hot emotion. In English it means to feel intense dislike for someone. The Greek here is *miseo* (miserly, misanthrope), to detest, to abhor (BAGD, p. 522).

**5. It is hard to imagine someone who claims to be a Christian actively hating other Christians. How would hate for your Christian brother manifest itself (2:9)?** John wrote in stark contrasts: light/dark, old/new, love/hate. To John's way of thinking, if you do not love the brethren then you effectively hate them. With John, love is not merely a feeling, it involves obedience. Similarly, hate does not have to be a feeling, but rather a lack of obedience. It has been said the opposite of love is not so much hate as it is apathy, just not caring, indifference.

**Example:** During World War II, the Japanese invaders of the Philippines rounded up all foreign civilians and placed them in a concentration camp. The Japanese did not purposely mistreat them, but neither did they do much to provide for their needs. Theirs was a policy of legal indifference.

John's understanding of love is caring for the needs of others, even to the point of self sacrifice. If you are unwilling to do that for someone in need, then you love yourself more than you love him and you are not being neutral, in reality you hate him (Marshall, p. 131).

**6. What could have been happening in the church that would cause John to write this (2:9)?** See *Revelation 2:4*. There evidently had been self-professing believers in the church who had no love for the brethren. They were cold, indifferent and uncaring. If it was to Christians in Ephesus that John wrote this letter, then Jesus' rebuke to the Ephesian Church helps us understand the problem:

ESV **Revelation 2:4** . . . I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

**Application:** Many Christian couples have marital problems. If only they would apply John's teaching to each other, to the spouse, there would be far fewer troubled marriages.

— 2:10 —

\*\*\***What two things are true of him who loves his brother (2:10)?** He abides in the light and in him is no cause for stumbling.

**Truth:** Those who belong to Jesus will have a supernatural love for other Christians.

ESV **Romans 5:5** . . . God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

ESV **John 13:35** By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

**7. Is John primarily saying the man who loves his brother is not a stumbling block to others or that he himself will not stumble (2:10)? Why?** It likely means that since he walks in the light, he who loves his brother will not himself trip over anything; he himself won't stumble. That this is what John meant is even more evident from 2:11 (those who walk in darkness don't know where they are going). Yet both are true: do not be a stumbling block to others.

ESV **John 12:46** I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

Want to know God's will? Obey what you already know God wants you to do. I have found God lights our path one step at a time. As we step out in obedience, the next step becomes evident. However, if we stand still, if we are not walking in obedience, the path ahead remains in darkness. If you want not know God's will, start by doing the things you already know to do.

**8. In this context, what would it mean to stumble (2:10)?** It would mean to carry out the acts of darkness, to fail to practice the truth.

ESV **Romans 13:10** Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

ESV **Galatians 5:14** . . . the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

— 2:11 —

\*\*\* **What kind of eyesight does a brother-hater have (2:11)?** He has been blinded by darkness.

**9. What is true of one he hates the brethren (2:11)?** Such a hater is **1)** in the dark, **2)** walks in the dark, and **3)** does not know where he is going.

**Truth:** Sin leads to moral and spiritual blindness. Sin will take you farther than you want to go, keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.

ESV **Proverbs 14:12** There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

**So What?**

**19. According to John, how are love and hate toward other believers expressed?**

**20. What salvation test does John lay out in 2:7-11?**

**Small Group Discussion Questions:** Ask everyone to divide up by gender into groups of three and discuss the following questions for 10-15 minutes:

***Why did John write this paragraph (2:7-11)?***

***In what ways do you struggle with love and/or hate for the brothers?***

***How can you better show love for others (at church, at work, at home)?***

\*\*\*\* = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session (30 minutes of teaching and 15 minutes of group discussion) and are based on the text of the ESV.
- You can hear this lesson being taught at [www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF](http://www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF).

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