

Lesson 5 – 1 John 2:7-11

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Review/Introduction

John is writing so we might know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13); so they may see the objective truth and subjective evidences that give assurance of salvation. Both objective truth and subjective evidence go hand-in-hand. John is making it very clear that a profession of possessing salvation without the evidences that flow from salvation is self-deception.

He is doing this by presenting tests to determine if true saving faith has been exercised or are the readers (and ultimately us) deceived. It is actually commanded in Scripture to examine yourself to ensure you have exercised true saving faith.

⁵Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? (2 Corinthians 13:5)

John presents his tests in four spirals laying out doctrinal and conduct tests or evidences of true, real, actual regeneration. We are in the first spiral.

II. Evidence of true saving faith – Spiral 1 (1:5-2:17)

A. Doctrine – Hold fast to truth – The way of salvation from sin (1:5-2:2)

B. Conduct – Obedience (2:3-6)

C. Conduct – Love (2:7-11)

D. Conduct – Sin (Don't love the world) (2:12-17)

Last time, we looked at the first conduct test (obedience). You can know (as a way of life) if you have come to know Christ if you keep on keeping His commands (obey Him). Obeying Christ demonstrates that you love Him. If you say that you abide in Christ then you must walk in the same manner as He walked (in the Spirit and in obedience).

How do most people define love? Most people probably view love as a feeling of strong, emotional attraction or attachment like the love of friendship, romance, parenthood, activities, possessions, etc. Love is the most referenced topic in the Bible whether love of God, love for God, or love of people. Today we will look at the next conduct test – love.

Spiral 1 – Conduct – Love (2:7-11)

1. Love is an Old Commandment (2:7)

⁷Beloved, 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.

⁷Beloved, 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. (ESV)

1 John 2:5-6 tells us that “by this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked”. Last time we noted two general ways that Christ walked – in the Spirit and in obedience. Now John gives a specific way Christ walked – in love.

In pastoral form, John connects to his readers with a term of affection. John is impassioned in his plea to the brethren that they are assured of their fellowship, union, abiding, in Christ by the subjective evidences of regeneration.

“Beloved” refers to a feeling of love based on the preciousness of the object loved. It is how the Father referred to the Son at His baptism (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) and transfiguration (Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; 2 Peter 1:17). It is how Paul referred to God thinking about His redeemed (Romans 1:7; Ephesians 5:1). It is a common address in the New Testament from the apostles to the recipients of their letters, particularly when imploring them to repentance or action (Romans 12:19; 1 Corinthians 4:14; Hebrews 6:9; James 1:16; 1 Peter 2:11; 2 Peter 3:1; Jude 3, 17, 20). John viewed his brothers and sisters in Christ as precious, and was imploring them to walk in love as Christ Himself walked in love.

❖ Do you view other believers as “beloved”?

John is not writing to them a “new commandment”. John had just said that a lifestyle of keeping on keeping Christ’s commandments (plural) was a demonstration of regeneration. Now he focusses in on a single commandment. This single commandment is not “new” meaning not fresh, novel, new in kind, unprecedented, uncommon, or unheard of. This commandment that he is going to give is something with which they are familiar.

This command is “old” or not recent, not new. They have had this commandment “from the beginning” or from the beginning of their born-again life since it is something they have “heard”. From the context in this section we know that this commandment is to love. They had heard since they had become disciples the importance of love.

When Jesus was asked about the most important commandment, He gave love as the answer. In doing so, He quoted/paraphrased two Old Testament passages. He also noted that love would be the distinguishing mark of the regenerate.

²⁸And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” ²⁹Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:28-31)

⁴“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! ⁵You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

¹⁷“You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. ¹⁸You 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. (Leviticus 19:17-18)

³⁵By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35)

The command to “love one another” appears at least a dozen times in the New Testament (John 13:34; 15:9, 12, 17; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12; and 2 John 5).

Paul taught that all commandments are “summed up” in loving your neighbor.

⁸Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law. ⁹For this, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and **if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”** ¹⁰**Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the* law.** (Romans 13:8-10)

¹³For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another.** ¹⁴**For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”** (Galatians 4:13-14)

James noted that believers fulfill the “royal law” if you love your neighbor.

⁸If, however, **you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,”** you are doing well. ⁹But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the law as transgressors. (James 2:8-9)

So, what is “love”? “Love” is the sacrificial commitment of my will to another’s needs and best interests regardless of the cost to myself. Love seeks another’s highest good, even if it costs a great deal; even if there is no response of love or gratitude. Love is not an impulse from the feelings. It does not always run with the natural inclinations nor does it spend itself only upon those whom we like or deem worthy to receive love. It is an act of the will, so we can choose to love even if we do not feel like doing it.

¹⁶**“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.** (John 3:16)

³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

⁴Love is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, ⁵does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, ⁶does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; ⁷bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸Love never fails; (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a)

❖ Whom do you love? Whom do you intentionally choose not to love?

2. Love is a Fresh Commandment (2:8)

⁸On 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.

⁸At 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. (ESV)

This commandment, to love, is not new. It is old and you have known it from the beginning of your Christian life. On the other hand, it is “new”. So, what way is it “new”?

Let’s look at John 13. At the last supper, Jesus washed the disciple’s feet (John 13:5-11). Afterwards, in the upper room discourse, He taught them something about the nature of love – sacrificial service.

¹²So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined *at the table* again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for *so* I am. ¹⁴If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵**For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.** (John 13:12-15)

The last supper continued on and after the identification of Judas as the betrayer, Jesus teaches more about love.

³¹Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; ³²if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. ³³Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ 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.** ³⁵**By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”** (John 13:31-35)

Later during the discourse Jesus says, “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:12-13)

We have already seen that the commandment to love is not “new” since it was given in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:17-18). So, how is Jesus saying that it is new?

It is new or fresh, novel, new in kind, unprecedented, uncommon, or unheard of because He qualifies it with “even as I have loved you”. The commandment is ancient and we see the Father’s love throughout the Scriptures in statements and actions, but Christ gave us the incarnate example of love – extreme and sacrificial. The commandment takes on new life or becomes unprecedented or uncommon because Christ gave us an example that we should walk in the same manner as He walked. This fresh commandment is “true in Him” because He walked in that manner.

The fresh commandment is also true “in you because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining”. There are several ways to understand this phrase, either globally for the church or individually for the believer. Contextually, the phrase points to the one time and continuing effect of regeneration. You have been changed by Christ at the point of salvation; and you are being changed by Christ because of salvation. The command is true in you (us) because we are being progressively sanctified.

¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)

Christ gave us an example, but He also sent the “advocate” or “helper”, the Holy Spirit, to supernaturally empower love in you.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is **love**, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

❖ **Do you empower love by walking in the Spirit?**

3. Characteristics of the Saved and Unsaved (2:9-11)

⁹The one who says he is in the Light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now.
¹⁰The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ¹¹But 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.

⁹Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ¹⁰Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹But 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. (ESV)

John has just made it clear that if you are not, as an increasing pattern of life, keeping on keeping Christ’s commandments, then you are not in fellowship, union, or abiding in Christ (i.e., you are unregenerate and are self-deceived). If you say you are a believer, then you have a moral imperative (ought) to walk in the same manner as Christ walked.

³By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: ⁶the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. (1 John 2:3-6)

Now John has narrowed down from commands to obey to one command, to love. Just like how not keeping on keeping the commands demonstrates profession with no possession, so does saying one loves and yet does not. “The one who says” again points to the false professors.

Before we look at hate, let’s look at who we are to love and not hate. The Scriptures clearly teach that believers are to love other believers. I don’t think that is in question.

³⁵By this all men will know that you are My disciples, **if you have love for one another.**” (John 13:35)

However, when we see brethren called out specifically like this, we could be tempted to only think that we need to “love” believers or “not hate” only believers. Clearly, that cannot be the case. We are to love all people, but are to think especially about loving believers.

¹⁰So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and **especially to those who are of the household of the faith.** (Galatians 6:10)

¹²and **may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people**, just as we also *do* for you; (1 Thessalonians 3:12)

So then, who are we to love? Jesus says “love your neighbor”. The Jews of Jesus time defined “neighbor” as other Jews, so they believed they were only required to “love” other Jews. Jesus corrects that with the parable of the Good Samaritan.

²⁵And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” ²⁷And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.” ²⁹But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰Jesus replied and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. ³¹And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³²Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, ³⁴and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on *them*; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.’ ³⁶Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ *hands*?” ³⁷And he said, “**The one who showed mercy toward him.**” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do the same.” (Luke 10:25-37)

It gets even grander than that since Jesus tells us to love our enemies.

⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I say to you, **love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,** ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? (Matthew 5:43-47)

²⁷“But I say to you who hear, **love your enemies**, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. (Luke 6:27-28)

So, when John says “brother” he means those united in Christ, but we are not to limit this to other believers. We should think of it as “love everyone, but especially believers”.

If you say (as a habitual pattern of life) that you are in the light and yet hate your brother/sister then you not only are not in the light, but you have never been in the light. You are in darkness.

It is unfortunate that we often try to interpret a word like “hate” based on experience or relativity. When we think of hate we often think of Hitler, Stalin, Skinheads, murderers, overt racists, etc.; people who even from a worldly standpoint are “evil”. So, we equate “hate” with “evil”. “Hate” in English usage means to “to feel intense or passionate dislike for (someone) or to have a strong aversion to (something).”

The Greek has the same meaning. Yet, context determines meaning. John is writing in contrasts: light/darkness, truth/lie, and love/hate. The usage is the present tense describing a continual attitude of hatred. Contextually, hate is the opposite or absence of love.

There are both active and passive expressions of hate. Active expressions are those looks, words, deeds, violence, etc. towards a person. I think most Christians know these are sin. We know that this is not pleasing to God.

There are also passive expressions of hate like indifference, coldness, isolation, exclusion, or unconcern for another, for those that cross your path. We will get to chapter 3 later, but there is a good description there. Hate is described as “closing your heart against someone”.

¹⁴We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. ¹⁵Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and **closes his heart against him**, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸Little children, **let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.** (1 John 3:14-18)

❖ Are there any passive expressions of hate in your life?

Verse 9 describes the false professors. Verse 10 is the contrast. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. The one whose profession and practice match does not have to “say” anything. They do not have to make a claim of profession. A lifestyle of love demonstrates that one abides in the light. If you abide in the light you can see where you are going.

¹⁶⁵Those who love Your law have great peace, And **nothing causes them to stumble.** (Psalm 119:165)

If you are abiding in the light (connected to Christ) and walking in obedience and love, you are being progressively sanctified and you will be actively reducing your sinning against others.

¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; ¹¹for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. (2 Peter 1:10-11)

But, the one who hates is spiritually blind and in spiritual darkness and walks in darkness. Verse 11 gives us a description of the condition of the one who, as a pattern of life, hates (= does not love). Hate is just the manifestation of the condition.

1. “in darkness” – this person’s heart is separate from the light. They are unregenerate.
2. “walks in the darkness” – this person walks in sin, a display of which is hate. The course of his life is separated from God.
3. “does not know where he is going” – this person is blind to the truth of his current state, blind to the direction, and blind to the eternal destiny of his unregenerate life. Yet, he is so blind that he believes he walks in light (v9).

The person whose life is characterized by hate is lost and to be pitied (i.e., to feel compassion which moves you to action). The truth of people in this condition should move us to love them actively, taking the gospel to them.

❖ **Are you loving those who cross your path?**

Conclusion

John is writing to present tests of true saving faith. The purpose is to ensure that his readers know if they have eternal life (actual, true, real regeneration) or not. Today's passage looked at love or not hating. If are regenerated then you have a moral imperative to walk in the same manner as He walked. If you are regenerate then love is an outflow of your connectedness to Christ. Conversely, hate is a characteristic of the one who is in darkness, walks in darkness, and is deceived about their final state.

Additional Study

1. Each time you come to the Scriptures, pray for the Spirit to give you understanding.
2. Read 1 John once this week a chapter at a time (one chapter a day for five days).
3. Pray that God would show you personal applications from today's passage.
4. Read today's passage noting repeated words/ideas and ask yourself what John means.
5. Re-read the notes from today and contemplate the thought questions.