

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

**Introduction** – Follow the argument. God is light and in Him there is no darkness (1:5). Therefore, to make a claim that you have fellowship with Him while walking in the darkness (1:6-2:1), or to claim to know Him while not keeping His commandments (2:3-6) is an oxymoronic theology (bad doctrine). John is not implying perfectionism; he is attacking false teaching. These teachers also lied about community life, claiming that *gnosis* and *menein* (knowledge and abiding) in the light were not connected to how I treat my brothers and sisters in Christ.

**Assurances** – At the same time John is building a case for the right kind of assurance for believers. If we acknowledge our sins, if we have a zeal for God's ways, and if we love one another, we know that we have come to know Him; we know that we are abiding in Him.

**The Same Old New Commandment** (vv7-8) – John loves playing with words. The commandment is not new (on the one hand), it is old. Yet (again, on the other hand), it is new. It is old because the community had heard it “*from the beginning*.” This beginning, therefore, refers to when they heard the teachings of Jesus and His apostles. And what is this commandment? The fact that John talks about love and hate in vv9-11 suggests the commandment he has in view, and he is using the language of Jesus (John 13:34f). And in 2 John 5-6 we have unmistakable evidence that this is the commandment of love which Jesus gave to His disciples, “*love one another as I have loved you*.”

**What Makes it New?** – It was an old commandment, from the beginning, ever since Jesus taught it. In fact, it was even old when Jesus called it new (Lev 19:17). This commandment to love is new in at least two senses from the text. First, it is new because it is “*true in Him and in you*.” John says, “*God is light*” (1:5), Jesus said “*I am the light of the world*” (John 9:5) and because we are in Him, He said, “*You are the light of the world*” (Matt 5:14). Similarly, “*God is love*” (1 John 4:7), Jesus said, “*Greater love has no one than this, than he lay down his life for his friends*” (John 15:13), and then because we are in Him, He said, “*Love one another as I have loved you*” (John 15:12).

Secondly, it is new because “*the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining*.” This true Light came to save the world because He loved it (John 3:16-17) and this love defines His new community (John 13:35) which brings in the whole world (Isaiah 49:6, 60:19-20). This love conquers the world, for the old, dark world is passing away and the new heavens and the new earth are already shining.

**Christianity 101** – This is quite distinct from a form of gospel preaching today which teaches, “Believe in Jesus now, keeping His commandments and loving others is the second stage and optional.” Instead, what people should hear in the gospel is that Christ died for sinners and God offers forgiveness, hope, and life-changing power to all who believe. Salvation breaks the guilt and power of sin and in the power of the gift of faith, Christians are transformed people.

**Light/Darkness and Love/Hate** (vv9-11) – Jesus, who is the true light, is the light of love and therefore to be *enlightened* in that light, to *abide* in that *knowledge* is to walk in love. Light and love, darkness and hatred, belong together. The genuineness of faith is evidenced not only in a desire to love God (keeping His commands) but to love His children. A belief system that allows for hatred of the brethren (it doesn't matter how I treat others) “*is in darkness until now*.” John will come at this again and again in the epistle (1 John 3:14-15, 23, 4:20-21). Jesus teaches us what love is and therefore we know that hatred is the opposite. Love is described in 1 Cor 13:4-7 and hatred is its opposite.

**Hatred Distorts Our Perspective** – The end of verse 11 is worth camping on for a moment. Because we are such individualistic, self-made Americans, we are apt to think that our relationships have no effect on our ability to think clearly. But John says that if we hate our brothers, if we are full of envy, gossip, malice, bitterness, lies and slander, then our way is not going to be easy. Do you ever feel like you have no idea what God's will is for your life? Consider how you are living with your spouse, your children, your fellow Christians, particularly those nearest to you. If you want to know where the Lord is leading you, repent and love your brothers and sisters. Obedience brings forth understanding, wisdom and direction.

**A Community of Overflowing Light and Love** – His mercies are new every morning, and they are not only new for you, they are new through you to others. This is also what makes the old commandment new: the fresh work of the Spirit of Christ today in the community of brothers and sisters in Christ, for He abides in us. There is no legalism in the command as though John were saying, “love one another in order to be saved.” Love comes true in us because the true light is already shining. Love can't earn the light of the kingdom; it is the light of the kingdom (2:8). Love doesn't merit eternal life; it is eternal life (3:14). When we love, we don't earn God's love; it is God's love in us (4:12). And as we do this (or as He does this in and through us), the world will know that we are the disciples of the God of light and love.