

## 1 John 2:6-11 (NKJV)

**6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.**

**7 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.**

**8 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.**

**9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.**

**10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.**

**11 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.**

Remember that we talked last week about living in the presence of God. And we looked at how the command was **new** and how it was **not new**.

We will continue in our text this morning.

Now, was this command to love one another a **new command** to these believers? No. Probably not. They had probably heard the command before. After all, it was one of **Christ's** commands to His followers. These teachings would be front and center in discipling believers. So it **wasn't a new command** in that it was the first time they heard it. It was **new** in that it was not the same command as given in the Old Testament. The context shows that they were already living out Christ's love in many ways.

Look at verse 8.

**8 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.**

He says that the **thing is true in Christ and in you**. In other words they are **already living out** that which they have seen in Christ. They have heard about His example and they are emulating His brand of love.

John is confident that these believers know what it is to reach out to meet another's need without regard for what it costs because that person is a believer. And that is a wonderful thing. It is evidence that faith is real.

Paul was confident of this reality too when he talked to the Thessalonians.

## **1 Thessalonians 4:9 (NKJV)**

**<sup>9</sup> But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;**

John will go on to give us a working definition of what love does. That is soon to come. And it is extremely helpful. And I believe it is different than what the definition would have been based on the example of the law. It isn't that God changed at all. But after Christ showed us what God's love **really looks like**, we are called to a higher standard.

Now let's look at verse 8 a little more.

## **1 John 2:8 (NKJV)**

**<sup>8</sup> 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.**

**because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.**

What is the darkness? Well darkness is absence of light. This entails lots of things being absent. The **truth of God** is absent. This entails a misunderstanding of what **God's purposes** really are. Darkness entails not seeing **the end goal** for this planet. It entails not understanding **God's plan of salvation** and **appreciating it for what it is**. Darkness is the **absence of all of the important truths that are necessary for seeing our lives for what they really are**. The planet is in darkness now. And it is a realm. It is a kingdom one is in. It is one's environment.

I deal with a lot of nice people every day. Many of them are kind and thoughtful and considerate and even giving. Many act much better than I do. And they are living in complete and utter darkness if they don't know Christ. Sometimes it is hard to keep that in perspective. But darkness is not proven when their allegiances are **not being challenged**.

But if Christ were to walk up to that person and say, come follow me. Suppose He were to say things like He says in-

## **Matthew 16:24-26 (NKJV)**

Deny all of your plans and visions for your life and strap on this electric chair neckless to remind you of the cost, and follow Me. Everything you are currently **living for** you will one day **lose**, but if you **follow me** and **give up all of that**, you will find that **you will have life forever**. What do you really hope to gain by chasing your dream for your life? Death will sweep it away. Give it up and I will give you life, and it will be life to the full.

I died for this chance for you. Do you think that I am worth following or not?

If Christ were to say that to the people we know, we would see what is **really** true about them. We might see how much they really do **love this life** and this world and they would not give it up, **no matter what** Christ did for them. They worship the created thing, even though the Creator is offering them so much more. That is the perfect illustration of darkness. That is living with no light inside or out.

So we cannot be overly impressed by the good works of people. The loyalty of people who reject the Gospel or have never heard the gospel is, by default, for their father the devil. And being Anti-Christ is the default position of everyone's soul since Adam.

So there is plenty of darkness.

But at the same time, there is light. And what is the essential light?

**the true light is already shining.**

The word for true here is interesting.

The first word "true" in verse 8 where it says that **this thing is true in you** does mean **true as opposed to false**. But where it talks of the true light, it is not speaking of true as opposed to false. It is true, as in the **essence of a thing**. We use the word the same way.

When you go to ball games you will always see some **true** fans. You know it because they are the essence of someone being for their sports team. They may paint their faces. Their clothing will reflect their zeal. They will know the statistics of their team. They will know their status in the standings. They will know all the player's names. They will cheer for their team without abandon. And we might say, now there is a **true** fan. We are not trying to say that, as opposed to the person asleep in the chair next to them, **they are true**. No. What we mean is that they are **the essence of that thing**.

When this verse talks about the **true** light, that is the word being used. And Jesus is that way, the truth, and the life. He is the **essence** of those things.

The true light is Christ. Jesus is the light and as a by-product we are the lights. The reason for the change in expectations, the change in the love standards, is a result of **the light that is shining**.

Darkness is receding. It does not look that way to us. There are lots of things that are getting darker in western civilization. But more people are coming to Christ now than ever. And there are more believers living on the globe now than there have ever been. They aren't growing in numbers in North America, but they are growing in numbers on the globe.

There is also the plan of God that is moving in a steady direction. At 6 am every morning the darkness is ready to give way to light. Well, we are in the 6 am stage of history. The darkness will soon give way to light.

Christ is already shining. His gospel is going everywhere. People are coming to Him who have never even heard of Him before now. At the end of the day, Jesus wins. Period.

And our verse says that the **reason** that this love that Christ commands **is in us at all** is because of the **True Light** that is shining.

Now remember we are to walk in the light. John told us that in the first chapter. We are to walk with truth exposed. That is a very humbling walk. And Christ is the **ultimate** truth, the **ultimate** revealing, the **ultimate** of eternal reality. We are **reflecting** His light and His light reveals what is wrong about us so that we can conform it to His will. It also lights our path so we know which way to go.

Now, remember we talked about passing tests a few weeks ago. Here comes another test. And it is very simple. It is not difficult to figure out.

### **1 John 2:9-11 (NKJV)**

**9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.**

**10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.**

**11 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.**

We cannot miss the assumption here or we are prone to be suckers. John is assuming that there will be people who **make claims** to be in the light but they are **haters of fellow believers**. Their attitude proves their position. Now what is hatred? To hate is, well, to hate, to pursue with hatred, to detest. If the **kind of love** Christ requires is the love that **intends that which is best for a person and delivers it when able**, what is **hatred** but the opposite of that? It is that which **intends harm to a person and would deliver it if able to do so**.

So who do we hate?

Who do we want harm to come to them?

We need to be careful here. We need to take all of scripture in context to know what we should and should not do. Paul was clearly angry about some wolves who were feeding on Christ's sheep. And he did wish harm for them, at least enough harm to stop them from doing what they were doing and, if they would not stop that they would be silenced. He warned people about

them. But he would not take steps of vengeance. So we cannot conclude that if we ever have any **negative thoughts** toward someone that we are guilty of **hating our brother**.

And we sure cannot assume that just because someone says they are a brother that they really are.

At the same time, we cannot water this down until the statement means nothing. It means what it says. A person who lives in hatred toward fellow believers is showing clear evidence that they are not a believer at all.

How can we know if we hate someone?

Well Jesus gives us some help here. He does not use the word "hate" but the destination he uses is hell, so we can assume we are talking about similar traits.

### **Matthew 5:21-22 (NKJV)**

**21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'**

**22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.**

The ultimate expression of hatred is murder. If you were to remove all the restraints from a person who hates, he would murder the person. Those who hated Christ sought to murder Christ. Cain hated Abel and murdered him. But we are not likely to murder anyone, so we might think we are in the clear, even though we might hate people.

Jesus brings clarity to this situation.

Do you foster anger toward someone without a viable addressable sin that this person has committed against you?

Do you view that person as being worthless, having no value? That is what RACA means.

Do you regard that person as a Moron? That is the root of the word Fool?

Have you taken the steps that Christ commands to restore that relationship?

For me, I find the following test helpful. **Do I want that person to repent and receive Christ's forgiveness?** We all have people who have done us harm. And we have no need to pretend that what they did to us did not harm us. And some are unrepentant. In fact they might be clueless to the harm they are guilty of. And sometimes, even when they come clean, you have evidence that they still don't understand what they have done.

How do you regard that person? Now, imagine that they come before Christ. And Christ points out their sin to them. And they dramatically repent. Do you,

in your heart of hearts, **want Christ to forgive them**? If you do not, you must seriously consider that you probably hate that person. And if you can live in hatred of that person, you probably are not a believer.

Let's take a look at Jonah. He hated the Ninevites. How do we know? When they had an opportunity to repent, Jonah wanted to rob them of that opportunity. Jonah wanted them to go to Hell. He did not want them to repent. He did not want them to be spiritual brothers and sisters with Him. That is the ultimate hatred. That is eternal murder. And God would not allow Jonah to exist in that state. The Ninevites were guilty of hideous sins against the Jews. The Jews had all suffered harm at the hands of the Ninevites. So they would have thought they would have had good reason to hate. But God would not allow Jonah to stay there.

Do you hate someone who you have reason to believe is a believer? If so you must do serious business with that. If you will not, that is very good evidence that you are not a believer.

So he **who detests** his brother is in darkness.

These are words that we must do business with. Paul dealt with lots of believers. Some of them caused him a great deal of discomfort and frustration. That is much like dealing with our own children. We have all been exasperated with those we love. We may want those we love **to grow**, or **submit to Christ**, or to **make changes in their lives** and we grow frustrated with them. We might have very strong negative feelings toward them at times. But that anger might be a display of love, even a very imperfect love. But what John describes here is different.

Is there anyone who claims to be a believer and you have reason to believe that they **might be**, but you disdain them anyway? This situation should not allow you to sleep at night. This is a huge deal.

Is there a believer that you cannot think of them without wanting harm to come to them? That is what this is describing. Now sometimes we want God to discipline a believer to get them to change their lives for the better. Again, that is not hatred. Because what we want is their good and a good spanking might help them straighten out. That is not hatred.

When we see what we believe are un-addressable sinful attitudes in a believer, we might have very negative feelings toward that person. But those attitudes might be caused by our love for them. Their sin and stubbornness vexes our soul. We actually suffer for their resistance to God's will. It hurts us. That is not necessarily the byproduct of hatred. It could be the byproduct of long suffering. God may want us to relate to Him in a tiny way. He may

want us to feel what it is like loving sinful humans like ourselves. So all negative feelings are not necessarily hatred.

But think of a believer for whom you wish harm.

Do you wish them misfortune more than the discipline of God might administer? Do you want them to hurt because they have hurt you?

God's word says <sup>9</sup> **He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.**

We cannot trust our evaluations of ourselves. We can only trust what God says. And His word is always true. If we have hatred in our hearts for someone who is likely a believer, we must do the business that God prescribes. If we must **go** to them, **go**. If we must **change our attitudes**, then **change**. If we need **help**, then get it. But if we refuse to act, we are essentially saying that it is ok that I am choosing a position that proves my claim to Christianity false. Are we really comfortable with that?

John left no wiggle room in this statement.

We are either in the light or we are in the dark. Our behavior is evidence of the position we are in. And the position we are in determines our destiny.

John is claiming that **you cannot be in the position of light** with our lifestyle being one only carried by **the position of darkness**. You can't be **God's child** and live your life having the **devil's disposition**.

We might be able to come up with an internal Gnosticism that will permit it, but like John said earlier, we are just proving ourselves to be liars.

Hatred is one of those tests that John uses. And believers must pass them. We must.

And we can talk all day long and we can give wonderful testimonies and present compelling truths and have wonderful devotions, but if we live in hate toward a brother and will not submit to conviction, we are showing ourselves to be as spiritually blind as a bat.

Who do you hate? That is a very serious question that needs a serious answer. There is something to add here.

**Proverbs 4:18-19 (NKJV)**

**<sup>18</sup> But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.**

**<sup>19</sup> The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble.**

Look at this. Darkness makes people stupid. And it makes people stumble. A person in the darkness does not make smart choices. They think they are deciding so rationally when they chose to hate. But they cannot see the light

or adjust to the light. They are in darkness. And that darkness is determining all of their decisions.

Churches are prone to descension. But often it is because there are a lot of people who are **walking in darkness** who are pretending to be **walking in the light**. And no amount of effort will fix the problems created by those folks.

**<sup>11</sup> 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.**

Have you ever talked to a person who was determined to do the wrong thing no matter how many times you appealed to them not to do the wrong thing. This might be explaining the **real** issue. A person in darkness **thinks** they are **seeing** but they are not seeing **anything** clearly. They think they are **thinking** but they are not concluding **anything** rationally.

I liked a quote by Martyn Lloyd Jones. **He said “the real tragedy about the non Christian is that he is not master of himself or in control of himself; he is governed by his surrounding and circumstances.”**

Mr Jones talked about unbeliever’s lives and attitudes being so often determined by what the winds of chance bring their way. They cannot get beyond it. And they cannot see beyond it to another reality. That is what darkness produces.

There is also another point to make here.

**<sup>9</sup> He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.**

**<sup>10</sup> He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.**

Unloving people cause stumbling. When a person is **absorbed with themselves** in the **darkness of life** that can **only respond to life** as it happens to them, they interpret everything based on their perceptions. And their perceptions are as small as their own little lives.

So they perceive **insults** where there are none, **offenses** where there are none, **slights** where there are none. And they live continually responding to that life view. They live devoid of spending themselves for another’s good. Most pastors have stories about the great harm that people like that have caused in their fellowships. And they cannot be corrected because they **cannot see** how they are the **source** of the problems. Now sometimes this can be caused by immature Christians. But often the problem is that the person in question is in **the wrong realm** with **no ability** to see at all. The person is **in darkness** and needs to be **saved**. This is something to consider



when a person **refuses** to love his brothers and sisters, and is continually critical of how those fellow believers **fail in loving them**.

Now if you ask yourself the question, “what believer do I despise?”, and you can say, there is **no believer that I despise**, well that is a good start.

Now the next question is, who do you love?

**<sup>10</sup> He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.**

We will get to this later in greater depth, but we need to at least refer to it now. Who is it that, if you see their need, that you will spend all that you have to meet it? That is who you love. We want to think, who do I feel sentimentally fond of? Who do I have good wishes for and good thought for? Who would I like to live long and prosper? We think that those are the people we love. But that is not what Jesus’s definition of love is. Again we will see this later. But who, if you clearly see a real need and you can meet it, will you spend everything you have to meet that need. That is who you love.

So who do **you** love?

Note too that believers who love their fellow believers are not the ones who stumble or cause others to stumble.

Think about that. Will being loved cause you to stumble? When you know there is someone who is willing to reach out to meet your need, even when it costs them dearly, what is there to hurt your faith in that? Oh sure, we are never going to do it perfectly. And we carry with us **who we are**. So our love will be lopsided and inaccurate. We will be irritating at times. We may project reasons that **we do what we do** into what **someone else does**. It is not always going to be pretty. But when you know that someone is **for you**, does that not change your attitude toward them?

And to know that your good is actually more important to the other person than their own good, what is there not to like about that? To know that they are not looking for an angle to **get from you what they want out of you**, they are not looking to exploit you, they aren’t looking to use you. Isn’t that a wonderful thing? Isn’t that what makes the body of Christ a different place? And then think about the one who lives a loving lifestyle, themselves, not stumbling. What often causes us to stumble? James tells us it is having fleshly desires and then being frustrated that we cannot get what we crave. That is where the wars come from. But a person who is loving is always looking to others to measure, not what they can **get**, but what is **needed** that they can **give**. Who ever stumbles with that attitude in a fellow believer? Has it ever ruined your day that the people in the church would die for you if that is what was needed? Can you really be disappointed when what you are striving to do

is **give**. If someone doesn't want what you have to give, you can even see that as a good. It is less work to do. It is one less sacrifice that you need to make. Maybe you will get a free evening.

People who are truly **loving** because they **love God** and they just want to express that love in a way **that God appreciates** are not prone to stumble. Their attitudes are free of so many of the focusses that are destructive. They aren't easily offended or miffed or insulted because they weren't in the relationship with a motive to get anything from the beloved. They were not continually evaluating the relationship on how well it paid off. They weren't trying to get their needs met. They were trying to give. That is such a wonderful attitude to have.

It allows for things like a man dying on a cross, for people who were currently His enemies, without an ounce of regret for what He did. In fact He did it for a joy that would be received later. And so it was.

That is what a loving attitude allows and creates. That is living in the light of Jesus, allowing his evaluation of our lives to be the primary one. And we see everything in comparison to **how He loved us**. We see our lives in the Light of **His life**.

Yes, when that happens it is a miracle. People in darkness do not live that way. There is no payoff to do such a thing.

The good news is, if that is **your attitude and commitment** to the body of Christ, that is a very solid proof that you are a follower of Christ. If you have that attitude, you can pretty well relax because that did not come from you. And even if you make mistakes in how you go about loving your brother or sister, you are not going to stumble in a way that falls. You have the right attitude. You have a Christ like attitude. You have a miraculous attitude that only Christ could have created. So rejoice. You are one of the people that God will use to foster even greater fellowship while you live, and you will have a rich reward when you die that you can have great confidence in now.

This would be a good week to look at our lives to see how well our **actions and attitudes** fit into the realm they **should** be in. Are we the kind of person looking to give rather than get? Are we regarding each other through the eyes of Christ, only wanting the best for others and willing to spend ourselves to give them what they need?

Or are we approaching life to get from others, constantly evaluating how good a job they are doing at giving to us what we want from them? Is there any brother or sister we really hate. If we will ask God to shine the light on our hearts, He will.