



Finer Grounds Bible Study

1, 2, & 3 John Lesson 4: 1 John 2:7-14

Read 1 John 2:7-8

In these verses, John writes a statement that seems confusing at first:

"Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you."

What does he mean that they have “no new commandment” but a “new commandment”? The newness of the commandment cannot be that they were to love, that has *always* been the commandment from the beginning. As John says, to love one another is an “old commandment” (Leviticus 19:18, 34; Deuteronomy 6:5; et al.). Instead, the difference of the commandment to love is in respect to its *quality*—it has taken on a new meaning, “because the darkness is past and the true light [Jesus—CS] now shines” (v.8).

“The commandment of love is both old and new. Old, because John's readers have had it from the beginning of their Christian experience. New, because, in the unfolding of Christian experience, it has developed new power, meaning, and obligation, and closer correspondence “with the facts of Christ's life, with the crowning mystery of His passion, and with the facts of the Christian life.” (Vincent's Word Studies)

The commandment is different because while before we didn't know exactly what true love

looked like, now we have the Word—Jesus, the perfect communication of God to us—our sinless example of how we are to love one another. God in human form, come to show us *exactly* what love looks like. Now we have no excuse for not knowing what true love is—and no excuse for not learning to shine brighter and brighter as living examples of that love.

Jesus loved others with a greater quality than the world had previously known. When we show Christ's love to others—this is true in both Him and us. Remember the context—if we are walking as He walked (1 John 2:6), then we, as reflections of His “true light” (v.7) will be showing that same love that Jesus showed to the world.

Also notice that this kind of love is not optional. We *must* love one another just like Jesus showed us. It is a new commandment—one that John heard from Jesus Himself:

- “For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you” (John 13:15).
- “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

It is not something we can neglect to grow in, because, as Christ says, it is an identifying mark of the faithful Christian: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).



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Jesus has given us many examples of what love looks like:

- **Make a list of the ways Jesus showed His love while on earth.**

- **Write down some scriptures that give you an insight into the characteristics of Jesus' love.**

We have heard “love one another” over and over—what new quality does this take on when we consider how Jesus showed His love for us?

What is one thing you personally need to work on so that you can love more like Jesus?

Read 1 John 2:9-11

John draws a clear line between those in Christ and outside of Christ: those in the light reflect Christ's love—while those who don't are in darkness. Notice how there is only love or hate, dark and light—there is no in between with God.

“Hate” seems like a strong word. Honestly, I doubt that most of us would ever say that we “hated” anyone but perhaps our “hatred” has shown up in other ways. Did you realize that biblical “hatred” can mean “to detest”, but it can

also mean “to love less”? Perhaps in failing to love, we have hated; *Where love is not, there is hatred. The heart is not empty*” (Vincent's Word Studies). Thinking of it this way, hatred can show up in various ways:

- In failing to give someone something that's needed
- In not helping someone through a sin struggle you can clearly see
- In neglecting to show hospitality
- In gossiping/listening to gossip about someone
- In wishing bad things to fall on someone
- In being envious of what someone else has
- In having unloving thoughts about someone
- In failing to forgive

Here we also see relationship (fellowship—see 1 John 1:3, 6, 7) with God is dependent on our love for the brethren. It can be so easy to get caught up in trying to create a personal relationship with the Lord and forget to reach out to others—but John clearly points out that it is impossible to walk with God without loving others. Love and hate, light and darkness are direct opposites—we cannot abide in the God of love while we hate, just as we cannot walk in the light if we are in darkness.

The one who loves His brethren finds “none occasion for stumbling” (v.10)—or, better put, “he has no reason to stumble”. This is not about whether he gives reason for others to be offended, but rather that he will have nothing in his path hindering him from walking in the light. This is contrasted with the man who is blind and



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walking in the darkness—who has every little stone and stumbling block to fear

To summarize, the one who hates their brother or sister has their entire being and direction steeped in darkness:

- **is in the darkness:** state of being
- **walks in the darkness:** action
- **does not know where he is going:** direction
- **“is in the darkness even until now”:** a set direction—there will be no change until he changes this one aspect of his life

Christ cannot save us if we choose not to love our brothers and sisters. If we are living in hate, nothing will change our state of being or direction until we change our actions and feelings towards our brethren.

The remedy is love. The kind of love that Christ commands (AGAPE) is a love that seeks the best for another without considering what the other has done or what will be given in return. It is only when we love God’s children that we can abide in God’s love and light (v.10). Unlike the one who hates, when we love we *continue* to abide in His light (notice the word “abideth” in the KJV, which means “continues to abide”). We have a true sense of direction and a sure path ahead of us—and we will have no reason to fall.

Consider the above examples of what it can mean to hate—and any others you can think of. If any of these are a temptation to you, consider how you can overcome them, using Scripture as a guide.

Read Matthew 22:37-40

- **“On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”**

- **Consider the above statement—why does all the law hang on loving God and then loving others?**

- **What should this tell us about how much time and effort we should put into others in comparison with our own edification?**

- **How does hating our brothers and sisters cause us to stumble and lose sight of our path?**

Brainstorm: What steps can one take to start loving others if they have negative feelings towards them?

Read 1 John 2:12-14

After talking about how to love like Jesus, John addresses the different faith stages: those young in the faith (little children), those more mature in the faith (young men), and mature believers/veterans of the faith (fathers). Before



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we dive into John's encouragements to saints, let's consider the surrounding context. The previous verses talk about loving one another and being like Christ (v.7-11) and the following verses talk about not loving the world (v.15-17). It is hard to love one another like we ought, and it is especially hard not to love the world—seeing we live in this world and are surrounded by the things of this world everyday.

John's encouragement is well-placed. He realizes he is giving difficult commands and that when difficult commands are given, people need encouragement that they can succeed. We need to reflect more upon the wisdom of John—realizing that 1) we need to reflect more upon our strengths and victories in Christ and 2) we need to spend more time encouraging and building one another up—because the path is narrow that we walk and the pull of the world is strong.

Now let's look at the groups of people that John addresses individually:

I write to you little children:

Because your sins are forgiven you (v.12)

This is one of the first things a child of God needs to realize—that our sins have been washed away by the blood of Christ. We can't move forward without realizing that God has taken away our sin. This is the first victory of the child of God—the victory over sin—and the same victory that we can enjoy all day, every day as we walk with Christ.

Because you have known the Father (v.13)

Even the young in faith have a knowledge of God, and they need to be encouraged in the fact

that they do know and that they can continue to know.

I write to fathers:

Because you have known him that was from the beginning (x2; v. 13, 14)

Notice how he tells them the exact thing that he tells the young in the faith, that they know Jesus. Not only that, he tells it to them twice. Why would he feel the need to tell them that they know Jesus? Don't the mature in faith know that they know Jesus already?! It may seem like a little bit of a back-handed slap, but the fact of the matter is that, often, those who are mature in the faith can get complacent and forget to keep building on the foundation of their faith. The mature Christians in the faith need just as much encouragement to continue in knowledge as do the younger. They forget to continue in the things that they started with—a desire to know Him and grow. Older Christians need to remember to keep His Word in their hearts just as much as younger Christians. Mature Christians, as much as any, need to “take heed lest [they] fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

I write to you young men

Because you have overcome the wicked one (x2; v.13, 14)

The young are told that they have overcome “the wicked one” (Satan). Overcome here means to subdue, to prevail, to get the victory (Strong's). Even though they are not veterans of the faith, they still have their victories. Those who are in the “teenage years” of their Christian life tend to undergo more difficulties and face more challenges than those younger and older in the



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faith—those who are younger are full of zeal, those who are older (should) have seen and experienced enough to keep them going through difficulties. These middle years are the easiest ones in which to lose focus, become jaded, and give up—therefore they need to remember what they are fighting for and how they can overcome.

Those who are in this stage need a lot of encouragement. Sometimes we give a lot of encouragement to only the young as they are learning and the old as they become sick. Those in the middle need encouragement too—sometimes even more so than the new babes in Christ. Don't forget to keep encouraging *all*.

Because you are strong (v.14)

John then tells them they are strong, a word here that means “full of energy, mighty, valiant, powerful in body and/or spirit”. Sometimes this stage of life can make us feel weak—we don't have the natural zeal of spiritual youthfulness, or the spiritual maturity of the elderly. But we need to remember to not despise our own youth—but instead to continue to grow from strength to strength, using our greater knowledge and experience to renew our zeal and desire for the Lord (1 Timothy 4:12).

Because the Word of God abides in you (v.14)

Just like the babes and the mature in Christ, the young men are told that they have the Word of Christ abiding in them. They know Christ through what He has said.

Summary:

Every stage of faith in Christ is characterized by victory:

- All Christians know God
- All Christians have been forgiven of their sins
- All Christians have prior victories and experiences to draw encouragement from (even if it is just the victory over sin and death by being plunged in the waters of baptism).

How do you think these encouragements could help with the commands to love one another (v.7-11) and not love the world (v.15-17)?

What kind of encouragement can we take away from what he tells the Christians:

- **When we face problems and discouragements in the church?**

- **We feel tempted by the pull of the world?**

John told each of them that they knew God, or that the Word of God was in them.

- **What does this tell us about the importance of knowing God?**



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- Write down other Scriptures you can think of that talk about the importance of building up your faith in God—use a concordance if you need.

- Which of these stages best describes you? What encouragement and advice can you take away from this passage for yourself?

What can we do to make sure we never become complacent in our faith and keep building up our faith?

How can reflecting on our previous victories help us to overcome future challenges?
