

Lesson for August 7, 2005

The Book of I John

Chapter 2

Verse 7

“Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning.”

John now begins to introduce the subject of this epistle, which is virtue-love. This will become clear as we progress through the book. The commandment to love one another is not new. The word for *new* in Greek in this verse is “kainos”, which means new in form or quality. This word is translated “fresh” in another passage. The Greek word “neos” means new in time and is not used here. “Love one another” was actually an Old Testament command and renewed by Christ in the Gospels (especially in the Gospel of John). According to John, the believers to whom he is writing are familiar with this command to love one another. (Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:30; John 15:12)

“The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.”

This word, to love one another, was preached by Jesus and was heard by John and apparently many of the believers to whom he is writing.

“The word” in Greek is the word “logos” and denotes a discourse, a speech, a teaching or doctrine. “The beginning” is not a reference to creation, but a reference to the time in which these believers began to hear this commandment directly from Jesus (God manifested in flesh). The written Word from the Old Testament was being presented by the Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. (John 1:1-5)

Verse 8

“Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.”

As we study this book we must always remember that John is writing to believers, therefore, this verse must be understood in light of this fact. This commandment to love one another can be obeyed only if a person is “in Christ” (union with Him at salvation) and “walking in the light” (fellowship with Him in Time). The darkness in this verse refers to spiritual darkness (Greek “skoktia”) or lack of proper understanding and application of God’s Word. A person cannot understand God’s Word until he is a believer and in fellowship

with God. Darkness is often used in Scripture to describe Satan's cosmic system. The word for *light* in Greek is "phos" and is used metaphorically for spiritual understanding from Bible doctrine (the mind of Christ). Light is used in Scripture to describe God's power system. The word *shineth* in Greek is "phaino" and literally means, "to cause to appear". *Shineth* is also in the passive voice, which means the subject (the believer) is being acted upon. The believer is being acted upon by the True Light, Jesus Christ. (I Corinthians 2:9-14; I John 1:5-10)

Verse 9

"He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now."

John is reminding his audience that they have learned this doctrine and should be applying it as a means of demonstrating their faith. The word in Greek for *hateth* is "miseo" and means a malicious or unjustifiable feeling toward another. Therefore, if a believer has a malicious or unjustifiable feeling for another person he is in spiritual darkness and not executing God's plan (sin removes the believer from the light into the darkness). This is not a reference to salvation.

Application of the problem-solving device of impersonal love (virtue-love) for all mankind can be done only while in fellowship with God and through the power of the Holy Spirit (walking in the light). Virtue-love is always based on God's virtue and integrity resident in your soul.

Verse 10

"He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him."

John tells us that one test to see if we are abiding in the light is whether or not we are exhibiting virtue-love toward others. *Loveth* is the Greek word "agapao" and is a reference to God's love. God's love, as we know, is based on His integrity and virtue. *Abideth* is the Greek word "meno" and means to dwell, to continue, to remain. If the believer is dwelling in, continuing in and remaining in fellowship with God (the True Light), he will exhibit impersonal love for all. The word for *stumbling* in Greek is "skandalon" and means a scandal, an offence or a snare. If the believer is in fellowship and executing his spiritual life (which love for others demonstrates), he will not think or act in a scandalous or offensive manner toward others.

Virtue-Love

“Agape” is the Greek word for a deep, abiding love based on God’s integrity and virtue and can be produced by the believer only while in fellowship with God. We call this kind of love *virtue-love*. (Deuteronomy 6:5, 10:12-13; Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22; I John 2:5)

Virtue-love describes:

- 1) God the Father’s love for His Son - John 17:26
- 2) God’s love for all mankind - John 3:16; Romans 5:8
- 3) God’s love for the believer - John 14:21
- 4) God’s essential nature - I John 4:8
- 5) The believer’s love for God - Luke 10:27
- 6) The believer’s love for other believers - John 13:34, 15:12-13
- 7) The believer’s love for everyone - I Thessalonians 3:12;
I Corinthians 16:14; Romans 12:9; II Peter 1:7; I John 3:18; Ezekiel 33:31
- 8) The believer’s love for his enemies - Luke 6:27
- 9) A husband’s love for his wife - Ephesians 5:25

Virtue-love is constant, non-emotional and unconditional, though human emotions are often ascribed to God in the Bible in order to assist us in our understanding. Virtue-love IS NOT drawn out by any excellency of its object. Virtue-love is based on God’s integrity (complete, honest, pure, virtuous love based on truth) and God’s virtue (strength of character). God loves the believer because the believer possesses the righteousness of God. God loves His own righteousness wherever He finds it.

Virtue-love expresses the deep, constant love and interest of a perfect God towards imperfect, and therefore unworthy, objects (unbelieving mankind). Upon faith in Christ, this love and interest has the potential of producing in these now perfect and worthy (positional sanctification) objects (believers) a love towards God. In turn, God’s love is able to produce in the life of the believer virtue-love towards others. Virtue-love is a synonym for *divine agape love*. Virtue-love is love based on the virtue of the one doing the loving. This virtue-love desires to see others come to know the source of this love. (I John 4:18-21)

Under the control of the Holy Spirit, this virtue-love can be reproduced in the life of the believer. This *unconditional love*, whether exercised toward believer or unbeliever is NOT emotional, it is a matter of the right mental attitude. It does not depend on the “love-ability” or compatibility of the object. This love seeks the welfare of others. (Romans 13:8-10, 15:1-3; Galatians 6:10; Colossians 3:12-13)

Verse 11

“But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness has blinded his eyes.”

The word for *knoweth* in Greek is “eido” and means to understand, to perceive or to be aware. *Blinded* in Greek is “tuphloo” and means to burn or smoke. Metaphorically it means the dulling of the intellect.

His eyes in this verse, obviously does not refer to his physical eyes, but to his spiritual eyes. (Ephesians 4:17-23)

Earlier we learned that darkness is a synonym for Satan’s cosmic system and light is a synonym for God’s power system. With this in mind, John warns us that the believer who exhibits hate toward another person has stepped into Satan’s cosmic system and out of God’s power system. This believer will be blinded to truth as long as he remains in Satan’s cosmic system. Unable to know where he is going, the “blinded believer” plays into Satan’s hand and can be led into a system of human viewpoint thinking that will destroy his spiritual life. Recovery from this satanic deception is the utilization of the Rebound Technique of I John 1:5-10. This technique teaches us to acknowledge our sins to God and to resume our spiritual lives by returning to God’s power system.