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Loving One Another With The Love Of Christ **1 John 2:7-11**

Thank you for being here this morning as we continue our study of assurance of salvation from the book of 1 John. Please open your Bible to 1 John 2:7. 1 John 2:7-11 will be our verses for the morning. The title for our lesson this morning Loving One Another With The Love Of Christ. This morning we are going to be reminded that an abiding result of coming to know Christ is love for other Christians. Or as one author puts it, "Assurance of salvation becomes real when love gets real."

Last week and this week we are being reminded from 1 John 2:3-11 that coming to know Christ, the real Christ, is life changing. There are abiding results that stay with us from the day we come to know Christ until He returns. 1 John 2:3-6 shows us that an abiding result of coming to know Christ is that we keep His commandments. We submit to His Lordship and we follow the Spirit by learning and living Scripture. Salvation changes us from living a self centered life to a Scripture centered life. I hope you see that.

This morning we come to another abiding result of coming to know Christ. We obey the new command He gave us to love one another. Assurance of salvation comes from loving what Christ loves and we know Jesus loves the church and gave Himself up for the church. Because Jesus loves you and Jesus loves the church, you love the church. Not just the church corporately, but the individuals who make up the church.

Steve Lawson, "We can know Christ truly lives within us when we see His love permeate our hearts. If love fills our hearts, then we can be absolutely sure that we have been converted to Christ. One of the primary evidences that we have been genuinely converted to Jesus Christ is our display of sacrificial, selfless love for fellow believers."

The abiding result of coming to know Christ we are going to learn about this morning that John will keep returning to throughout the rest of the letter is love for other Christians. Where there is no love for other Christians there can be no assurance of salvation because God's love changes who we are and what we

love. That's why I titled this lesson Loving one another with the love of Christ. Christ's love for us and in us compels us to love other Christians.

1 John 2:7-11 shows us that an abiding result of coming to know Christ is that we obey the new commandment to love one another:

1 John 2:7-11

- 7 Beloved, 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.
- 8 At 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.
- 9 Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.
- 10 Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.
- 11 But 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.

This morning I want us to consider three truths from 1 John 2:7-11 that will help us discern if we have really come to know Christ by the way we treat other Christians:

1. John's example - 1 John 2:7
2. John's encouragement - 1 John 2:7b-8
3. John's exam - 1 John 2:9-11

Let's begin with John's example. Notice the first word in verse 7. **Beloved.** Whenever an author in the New Testament uses that language and we see it a lot, it signifies that the original audience is doubly loved. They are the white stuff in the middle of the Oreo cookie. Loved by God and loved by the author. This is how John viewed the people he is writing to. He loved them because God loved him and God loved them.

It's easy to think that authors of Scripture were great guys who automatically loved everyone, but that's not the case. Do any of you remember the nickname Jesus gave to John and his brother James? **Jesus gave those guys the nickname sons of thunder.** Do you know why? In Luke 9 we read about some Samaritans who rejected Jesus when he was on His way to Jerusalem. When

James and John heard about this they asked Jesus, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" Hey, Jesus, those eyes don't care about you, want us to call down a thunderstorm on em? Verse 55 says that Jesus turned and rebuked them.

What's the point? Love was not natural for John. **It was a quality that John learned from Christ.** It wasn't something that came naturally to Him, it came supernaturally to him. ***John MacArthur writes this description of John's example, "It is clear from the gospel accounts that John was capable of behaving in the most sectarian, narrow-minded, unbending, reckless, and impetuous fashion. He was volatile. He was brash. He was aggressive. He was passionate, zealous, and personally ambitious—just like his brother James. They were cut from the same bolt of cloth. But John aged well. Under the control of the Holy Spirit, all his liabilities were exchanged for assets. Compare the young disciple with the aged patriarch, and you'll see that as he matured, his areas of greatest weakness all developed into his greatest strengths. He's an amazing example of what should happen to us as we grow in Christ—allowing the Lord's strength to be made perfect in our weakness."***

Beloved is a term of endearment. It's how John saw himself and other Christians. He loved them because he knew God loved them. In one word John reminds every Christian that they are uniquely loved by God. I hope this is how we see ourselves if we are in Christ. I hope this is how we see one another if we are in Christ. If we struggle to love one another a good place to start is our perception. How we see other Christians affects how we treat other Christians.

John's example of love in verse 7 is followed by:

2. John's Encouragement - 1 John 2:7-8

Remember in the previous verses, verses 3-6, John writes about what happens when we come to know Christ. When we come to know Christ we go from living disobedient lives to obedient lives. An abiding result of coming to know Christ at a point in time in the past is that we seek to obey Him in the present. His commands are not burdensome to born again people. They're the delight of our hearts.

In 1 John 2:7-8 John zooms in on one of these commandments. "Beloved, 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. At 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." John doesn't say what the command is in these verses. The command becomes clear down in verse 10. "Whoever loves his brother." The command is ongoing agape love for all Christians.

The new command Christians keep in verses 7-8 is the command to love one another, all of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Loving the people of God is not a new commandment in the sense that God's people have always been commanded to love one another. Leviticus 19:18 is an Old Testament example, "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord." Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

God's people have always been commanded to love one another. **So, in what sense is love a new commandment if it was taught in the Old Testament?** I think so much of what John writes in his letter flows from what happened the night before the cross. Remember the night before the cross Jesus shared a final meal with the disciples. In the upper room Jesus inaugurated the new covenant and taught John and the other guys what they should focus on moving forward. **John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: *just as I have loved you*, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."**

What makes the new commandment new is that Jesus both taught it and exemplified it. Jesus' sacrificial love for us becomes the pattern for our love for one another. Ephesians 5:1-2, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Walk describes our daily conduct. The Christian obeys the new command to love one another by following the example of Christ.

Think back for a moment to your conversion. Think back to the time in your life when you really think you came to know Christ. You heard the true gospel and turned from sin and trusted in Christ. What changed if that was real conversion? What changed? You may have gone to church before your conversion and listened to sermons and sang the songs, but you didn't really love Christ or the

church in any meaningful way. Right? Church was something you did - not a family you belonged to.

Paul didn't love Christians before God saved him. He reminded Titus in Titus 3:3 of his attitude prior to his conversion, "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another." That was Paul and Titus prior to their conversion. Not loving. Hated by others and hating one another. He was externally religious and yet filled with hate.

This is the boat we were all in prior to our conversion. We were in the titanic of being hated by others and hating one another. What happened? Paul puts it this way to Titus in Titus 3:4-7, "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Loving Christians is impossible without the transforming power of the gospel.

We are so sinfully self absorbed that only the gospel can change hate filled people into love filled people. What we could never do in the flesh, we are empowered to do by the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is what? Love (Galatians 5:22). When we hear the gospel the right way and the Holy Spirit rides in on the wings of the gospel and convicts us of sin and converts us to Christ something changes - Our affection for Christ and for everyone who belongs to Christ. Someone who is saved treats the saints differently than someone who is lost.

John reminds the believers he is writing to at the end of 1 John 2:8 that what is true of Christ is true in them. John writes at the end of verse 8 that someone whose life is marked by agape love for other Christians shows that "the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining."

Remember darkness is equivalent to error with the moral quality of evil. It's how we all lived prior to our conversion. Paul reminded the believers in Ephesus in Ephesians 5:8, "for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." Believers no longer walk in darkness. We are children of light who walk in light.

Does this mean that you and I will love every Christian perfectly? No. It does mean that we will never allow our hearts to get to a place where we hate another believer. A pastor I had for a while in Kansas used to regularly encourage us in his preaching to "work it through." He would state some truth from the Bible and then exhort us to work it through. He knew that application does not come easily.

I wonder this morning if there is another believer in your life that you are having a hard time loving. What do you do? Start by seeing them the way God sees them - Beloved. Then take the new command serious and ask the Lord to help you love them. Love is sacrificial service of that person for the glory of God. Forgive them if they have sinned against you and obey a verse like Ephesians 4:31-32, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave! you."

James Montgomery Boice, "In Jesus love is made new in "the degree to which it is realized." John indicates this by adding in verse 8, "Its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining." In this verse "true" (alēthes, alēthinós) means "genuine," and the point is that the true or genuine love, like genuine righteousness, is now being seen not only in Jesus but in those who are made alive in him as well. In this sense, what was not possible under the Old Testament dispensation is now possible; for the life of Jesus, which expresses itself in love, is in his people."

John follows up his example and his encouragement in verses 7-8 with his exam in verses 9-11:

3. John's exam - 1 John 2:9-11

1 John 2:9-11

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

John just wrote about true believers whose love displays the fact that the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. What is true for

someone who is in Christ is not true for someone who is not in Christ. John's exam begins with the person who says he is in the light and hates his brother. His conduct contradicts his claim.

Hates has the idea of a strong aversion to. It's what comes to my mind when I think about blue cheese crumbles on a salad. I have an aversion to blue cheese. No matter how delicately I try and remove all of the white crumbles I inevitably get one on my fork when I am trying to eat a salad and it makes me want to throw up. What do you hate? What do you have a strong aversion to? Waiting in line at a round about when you are trying to get somewhere? Waiting in line to eat at a restaurant? Cold weather in Indiana in late April?

Unbelievers hate believers. People who live in darkness hate the light and hate people who walk in the light. Jesus says in John 3:19-20, "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed."

Are there people who claim to know God who hate Christians? Yes. John probably has in mind the false teachers who were in and around these churches saying things about Christ and sin and Christians that wasn't true. These people claimed to know God but they didn't love His people. Remember Paul describes them in his last conversation with the elders of the church in Ephesus. Acts 20:29-30, "I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them."

Ministry for these false teachers was never about love for other people. It was always about love for themselves. *Their goal was not to draw people out of the world to follow Christ, but to draw people out of the church to follow them.* This is evidence that they were in fact still in the darkness because people who are in the light do not want people following them, but following Christ.

James Montgomery Boice, "John does not say that the one professing to know God while actually hating his brother is a liar, though that is true also, but rather that he is in darkness and walks in darkness until now. In this verse the reference is obviously to John's Gnostic opponents, as is also the case in the other verses that begin "If we claim." The Gnostic claimed

to be the enlightened one. But he is actually in darkness, says John, if he fails to love his brother."

Remember John is writing about habitual continual activity. Someone in whose life is marked a characteristic hatred for Christians. Does this mean a born again believer won't have to battle negative feelings and emotions toward another believer? Oh, friend, here me on this - Just because the darkness is passing does not mean the darkness is completely gone.

We're not home yet. Our citizenship is in heaven but our King hasn't come back to take us home. We still live in a body of sin and death. **Loving one another will never be perfect in this life, but it should be progressively worked out.** When you see your heart trending in the wrong direction towards another Christian remember that you are in the light, a child of light and run to the light.

Rick Kress writes on these verses something I found helpful, "These verses (1John 2:9-11) are not talking about sometimes falling into the sin of hate. One of the tensions of the Christian life is to see the lack of love in your life and yet long for and strive for holiness. Let 1 John 2:1-2 be our comfort."

Friend, there will be times when you will have to fight to not hate another believer and to love them. You will fight if you're saved. You won't let a root of bitterness take root in your heart. You will deal with it through honest confession and seeking to replace hate with service. Not because you're so great, but because you belong to Christ and the Holy Spirit won't let you stay in a state of sin.

The negative example is followed by the positive example in verse 10, "Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling." **This whoever is someone who has come to know Christ. They love all the saints.** This is the person who shows that he abides in the light by loving his brother. Continually sacrificing for the good of other believers. Dealing with all known sin toward them and replacing sin with righteousness.

What does it mean that in such a person there is no cause of stumbling in him? That can be taken two ways. One way is that a believer who walks in the light and loves another Christian does not make other Christians stumble into sin. They're not a stumbling block in another believers path toward godliness. That's the way it's normally used, but I think its best to view it here as he himself does not stumble. **The individual himself.**

The person who walks in the light day by day does not stumble and the light gets brighter by the day. Verse 11 returns to the one who continually hates his brother, "But 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."

This is the sobering condition of a counterfeit Christian. **Boice, "It is not just that the man who fails to love his brother is without knowledge of God; it is also that everything he does is in darkness and is characterized by darkness. He continues in it. Finally, John adds that although he continues in his darkened walk, he does so without any clear knowledge of a goal. He walks on, for the way of the ungodly is one of restless activity. But he "does not know where he is going" (cf. John 12:35). There is only one explanation for this incredible state of affairs, a state in which men walk in darkness even though the true light is shining and do not have a goal even though God's goal in Christ has been made clear. It is that men are blind and cannot see the light nor discern the goal. Clearly there is no hope for such except in God, who is able to give sight to the blind and direct the sinner's feet in the paths of righteousness."**

How do you know that you came to know Christ at a point in time in the past? You keep His commandments including the new commandment to love other Christians. God's love for you changes your affections for Him and His people. This shows that you are in the light and should give you great assurance.