

1st JOHN BIBLE STUDY

1 John 2:7-14

Lesson #6

Introduction

Beyond any debate, the overriding issue of John's epistle, up to this point, has been his repeated descriptions of how a true Christian can be distinguished from a false professor. According to John, true faith has certain resultant effects on every believer. And from observing these effects, or the lack thereof, one may rightly assess the authenticity of their claim of faith. Many are those who claim a relationship, or a fellowship with God, because there's nothing preventing anyone from making such a claim. And many are those who do so, for a multiplicity of reasons. As long as there's no persecution or self denial required, everybody will likely claim membership. Lots of people will join a club if it has no rules of conduct or annual dues. And this describes much of contemporary Christianity.

In his gospel, chapter six, John records a situation where Jesus got up one morning to find at least 5,000 anxious followers wanting to make Him king, so He left and went across the sea to another town. But a great many of that crowd followed Him there the next morning as well. So He commenced to preach to them, metaphorically, about eating His flesh and drinking His blood if they wished to have eternal life, but the vast majority found this too much to hear, and decided He was just too radical for them. So apparently the whole crowd left Him, and then He turned to his faithful 12 and asked them if they wanted to go also? He just lost 5000 "seekers" and now He's asking the last 12 if they want to go too, now saints, that's radical evangelism. But that's evangelism according to Jesus. The nation of Israel was never told to evangelize the neighboring tribes, and Jesus had no desire to preach to simple curiosity seekers. Divine evangelism is meant for those whom God has chosen to be His from before creation, and catering to the frivolous and simply curious has never been the biblical model, either Old Testament or New. Yes, preach it to all who will listen, but recognize that most will eventually reject it, and accept that fact. Rejoice over the 12, don't spend all your efforts trying to change the mind's of the 5000.

When the crowd got big, Jesus preached a message that forced a decision on those who were assembled to hear Him. The frivolous found it too much to bear and went away, but the true recognized it for what it was and remained steadfast. Oh how I wish our churches would learn this lesson from Jesus, and preach messages that call for self denial rather than all this rubbish about self satisfaction, self improvement, self esteem, and prosperity, which are entirely the opposite of Jesus' message to the disciples. Almost every church and pastor we see today would rather have those 5000 that left, than those 12 who remained. And this is proved by the messages they preach, and the behaviors they tolerate.

Where are the churches that preach that the holy scriptures are the sole and only authority to define sin and righteousness. Where are the churches that absolutely won't compromise on the commandments, even if the immediate needs seem to justify it? Where are the churches that stand up and declare with unwavering loyalty, that it is God alone who defines what is right and what is wrong, and then back that up with their own actions and behaviors? Where are those who understand that **love** means **obedience to God**, and to demonstrate love means to help others in every way to also obey Him, so as to honor God and edify the saints. To show true love towards our brethren is to encourage them, in every way, to remain steadfast in their walk of obedience, and never ever do anything that teaches or encourages them to sin. Now, This brings us to our verses for this lesson, which I've titled:

No Cause for Stumbling

*7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. 8 On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. 9 The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. 10 The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is **no cause for stumbling** in him. 11 But the one who 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.* 1 John 2:7-11

Verse 7:

7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.

If we're going to understand these verses to their fullest intent, then we have to understand the context they're coming from. Not only are they about a simple commandment to have a loving affection for one another as common children of God, and one family, they are also showing us how that's rightly displayed and worked out from one to another. They must be contemplated within the framework of the whole paragraph of John's epistle. The prevailing thought that he's developed in this letter. He's told us that God is perfection (1:5) and those who truly know God will demonstrate behaviors and affections that are at least reasonably consistent with His. (2:3-6)

Now, John's telling us that this isn't something new that he's been teaching them, but something that the scriptures have taught from the beginning. God has, from the very beginning of His creation of humans, asked them to obey His commandments out of loving affection, as He declares at the beginning of their presentation in Exodus 20. He says:

1 Then God spoke all these words, saying,

2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery .

3 "You shall have no other gods before Me.

*4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, **to those who love Me and keep My commandments.***

Ex 20:1-6 (NASB)

Just as love cannot be stripped of its element of obedience and still be genuine, neither can obedience that's attempted without genuine love, ever be lasting and effectual. Any and all religions that consist of a set of rituals and practices that are performed out of traditions, or customs, or any other reasons, are not indicative of a relationship with the true and living God. A broken and contrite heart is the very basis of authenticity. One can only fake this for so long, and to certain degrees, before it shows itself to be contrived. God made mankind for a relationship that revolves around love, and all those wonderful characteristics that love produces and displays. This isn't anything new, its been the goal from the beginning. Without love, nothing else really matters. Remember Paul's words to the Corinthians?

1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

2 If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

1 Cor 13:1-3 (NASB)

A love that displays itself by willing obedience, is God's end goal for His chosen children. A claim of love that's void of obedience, or great acts of obedience that aren't really performed out of love, are neither of any benefit says the Apostles John and Paul.

Those of you who know this ministry also know that we place much emphasis of the technical aspects of the scriptures. We labor long and hard over the verses, and diligently study to make the full and proper interpretations of each and every one. We do this because we believe that it's the right and proper **meaning** of the scriptures that actually **are** the scriptures. So, very much of our time is spent in careful examination and interpretation. But I don't want anyone to ever get the impression that this ministry is ignorant of the higher goal of those scriptures to bring those chosen by God to the fullest knowledge of His divine glory and majesty, and His incomprehensible love and mercy toward those whom He's chosen to be His own. Unless those scriptures do that for which they were written, then nothing has been accomplished. And what is it that God has ultimately designed them to do? To reveal Himself to His children so that we may come to know Him intimately, and **love Him** for who He is, at least to the extent that any human actually can know almighty God.

All kinds of mistakes and misinterpretations of minor degrees are going to be present within that body of Christ, but the common element that won't be missing, that cannot be missing, is a true and genuine love for Him, and the desire to please Him to the best of our abilities.

Everyone whose there at the gathering of the bride (Rev 19) will be madly in love with Him, and anxiously awaiting His return for them. Then He will bring us all to the right and full understandings of those mysteries that we now debate, and even sometimes argue over. We'll probably all laugh together at our own silly shortsightedness when the full truth is finally revealed to us all. And I have no doubt that there'll be plenty of corrections and revelations available to even the best and brightest of us. Now, John's going to say some more about love, and explain its characteristics in the next few verses, so let's look at those now:

Verses 8-9:

8 On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. 9 The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

John seems to kind of contradict himself with this verse, but he's using this language to make a certain point. He's just told us that God's goal of love between Himself and His children was always at the heart of His creation, and now, under this New Covenant, based on the person and works of His Son Jesus, that goal has not been replaced, but rather even amplified.

Under the old covenant only the Jews were made knowledgeable of those things that please God, and instructed as to how to walk in that light. But now, under the new covenant, that knowledge of God's holy character has been made known to all the Gentile peoples, and very many thousands are already living and walking by that light. This is what he means by *the true light is already shining*, that there are now very many Gentiles who have come to know God through Jesus Christ, and are now walking (that is living) in conformity to that light of truth. The light of truth is producing visible results among the Jews and the Gentiles, and there's a tangible evidence of its presence by those saint's lives, which is a testimony to the glory of God and the authenticity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. (Mat 5:13-20) Those things that Jesus taught were now seriously impacting the beliefs and practices of thousands of people, both Jew and Gentile, even though Jesus himself was no longer there. His words have the power to change lives, whether He's still here or not, which testifies to the truth of those words, and the divine essence and authority behind them.

In verse 9 John goes right back to his black and white perspective. He says that anyone who says that he's in the Light, meaning that he's in a relational fellowship with Christ, and yet hates his brothers, cannot possibly really be in that Light, but is actually in the darkness of ignorance and self deception. In other words, there's no genuine relationship where there's no real love for the brothers. So that we're clear, we're talking about a genuine heartfelt caring and concern for the welfare of every brother and sister, not just something that's contrived to put up a front. Every true Christian knows this feeling very well in their heart's; an inexplicable affectionate care and concern for the benefit and welfare of other Christian brothers and sisters that we've never even met before, but still love immediately as we sense their sweet spirit, and mutual affection for Jesus Christ.

John says straight up that anyone who is devoid of this love, which is a fruit of regeneration, is still in the darkness, and is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It just can't be stated any plainer than this. Nowhere to my knowledge, do the scriptures describe the characteristics of regeneration with such absolute black and white clarity as John does in this epistle. And he just keeps on doing it, over and over again. There are NO cold hearted, loveless Christians, only those who falsely claim to be. So says the Apostle John. We constantly make excuses for all those cranky, ill tempered, and contrary members that are in our churches, but the Apostle John calls them exactly what they are, (frauds) and says they're still in darkness until now. If we don't have love, (that love that exhibits a humble spirit and willing obedience) then we don't have anything divine and eternal. (1Cor 13:3) Very many indeed are those who have their names on the rolls of a church, but not in the Lamb's book of life. (Mat 7:21-23) And John shows us some more about identifying the difference in the next verse:

Verse 10:

10 The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

If one simply reads over this verse without stopping and thinking it through they'll miss the intended implications. The one who loves his brother "abides" in the Light says John. In other words, the one who loves his brother "lives a lifestyle" that

is called "in the Light." We've already been told that this means that our behaviors are in conformity with Christ's behaviors, and that we are obeying His commandments. (vv. 4-6) Not only does this honor the Father and the Son, it also displays our love for one another, because we will not practice anything that will harm our fellow believers. That bad company corrupts good morals is a given, as Paul declared to the Corinthians:

33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." 34 Become right-minded and stop sinning, because some people are ignorant about God. I say this to your shame. 1 Cor 15:33-34 (HCSB)

Because some people, especially young believers, are unlearned in the scriptures, they will interpret your behaviors as acceptable, when they see you doing things that violate scriptures. So we must never be teachers of sin, but only teachers of obedience and righteousness. Paul told them to be **right-minded** and **stop their sinning**, because it was corrupting the morals of the other believers, especially the younger ones. When sin is tolerated within the lives of church members it will inevitably spread to others and infect the whole church. At no time, and in no way, is it ever loving to teach or encourage other believers to sin. This is total disregard and disrespect, both for them and for our Savior, and to call it loving is a bald faced lie.

Love towards our brothers and sisters is demonstrated by our own pure and holy lives, lived as an example of holiness, to encourage them to holiness. We will never willfully put a stumbling block of sin in the lives of those whom we truly love. When we are abiding (living) in the Light (obedience) we will not be the cause of stumbling to other brothers and sisters. And let's be clear, practicing disobedience to the commandments of scripture is stumbling. It's moving in the wrong direction from that which God has decreed for His children, and it's both harmful in this life, and may well cost eternal rewards in the next. This is Not what one does to someone they love.

When we willfully ignore scriptural teachings, and our brothers and sisters observe it, they will conclude that absolute strict obedience isn't really necessary, and then they will begin to take liberties with the scriptures as well. And they will do it because they saw us do it, and look up to us as their examples of Christian maturity. We cannot disobey even the tinniest provision of scripture without setting the dangerous precedent that some small sins are acceptable, and strict obedience isn't really necessary. Do I really need to point out where this path will inevitably have to end, if its ever started upon at all. We must never, ever, teach other brothers and sisters that God's word is subjective or suggestive, and that we can apply it or ignore it as we see fit.

Make no mistake saints, these words that Jesus spoke, that I'm about to quote, were written specifically to **you** and to **me**, not to someone else. He said:

6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 "Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!"

Matt 18:6-7 (NASB)

Whether we intend it or not, our actions will be seen as teachings, by virtue of their example to others, and what we do will be copied by those who don't know any better, or who do, but are weak of spirit and still learning how to do battle with the sinful nature. Do we see what John is doing in this verse? He's telling us what brotherly love actually looks like in day to day life. It looks like encouragement to others by walking in the Light ourselves, and never being the source of stumbling into sin for our beloved brothers and sisters. That's Christian love, that's godly love, as John is describing in this epistle.

But amazingly, that's exactly the opposite of much of contemporary thinking, and not just in the world, but also in the churches. It's often considered loving to ignore or tolerate sin. But how do we get such an idea? Do we think it's loving to encourage an alcoholic to continue drinking, when his liver is about to fail? Is that a loving thing to do when we know it's going to severely injure, or even kill them? But we readily overlook, and even encourage by example, the practice of sin among our brothers and sisters, that we say we love, when we know that it will severely injure, or even kill them.

As a Christian family we don't live as individuals. What each of us does reflects on us all. Whether we desire it or not, we are all examples to others, and as such we have both the responsibly, and much more, the loving desire, to be an encouragement to our family, not a stumbling block for it. No one intentionally harms those whom they really love. If we

take liberty with the scriptures, and practice disobedience to any of them whatsoever, we are sending the message that we endorse disobedience. And this harms our brothers and sisters, and brings them pain and loss. Our disobedience inevitably spills over onto those whom we say we love. The idea of individual autonomy does not work here. One alcoholic or drug addict in a family drastically affects the whole family, and one church member who deliberately practices sin affects the whole church, and much more so if it's a leader. That's simply the way it is.

John says that each and every one of us has a means by which we can demonstrate our love for our brothers and sisters, and that is to walk in the Light, meaning in obedience to the commandments of God, as an example and an encouragement to them to do likewise. Because this is our best possible gift to them. It shows them our love for God, our love for Jesus Christ, and our love for them, all at the same time, because in fact, they are all tied together.

Now I don't want to belabor this point, but I just can't move on yet until I've said all that I feel that I must. Everyone, at some point has, or will have, a friend or family member come to them for counsel. At these moments we're often tempted to try to show our affection and care by siding with them, and telling them that they're really okay. But what if they're not really okay. What if what they're doing is self destructive, or harmful to others? Is telling them that they're okay a loving thing to do? What if they're an alcoholic or drug addict, as we mentioned earlier? Are we to show our love for them by helping them get more whiskey or drugs? We know full well we can't do that, because their actions are harming themselves and those around them, so we tell them the truth, that they're addicted. We put our arms around them, and assure them of our love for them, and then, in no uncertain terms, tell them that what they're doing is absolutely wrong, and they must stop this behavior immediately. This is what's loving, because their lives and their family's welfare depend on our telling them the truth. To encourage them to continue is to promote their destruction.

There is no case where our advice or counsel to other brothers and sisters to continue in the practice of sin is an act of love towards them. Sin will do to their soul's and bodies what alcohol or drugs will do the those who abuse them. Sin will slowly eat away at them until they are either destroyed or they stop, but chronic sin will not leave a person unharmed. When chronic sin is the problem, only the harsh and straightforward truth will help. Our advice, and our example to them is to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in this present age, and repentance is the only treatment for sin, just like abstinence is the only treatment for addiction. A little more alcohol doesn't help an alcoholic, and a little more sin doesn't help a chronic sinner. I will acknowledge that the scriptures say that love covers a multitude of sins, but this doesn't by any means imply that the practice of a few chronic sins are okay, and we should approve of them in the name of love.

Everything whatsoever that a parent sees their child doing that might do them harm will be addressed by those parents and brought to the attention of their child. Not with anger or fury, but with loving concern for the health and welfare of those we love. No parent wants to see their children get hurt, so we're usually prone to be overly cautious when we're dealing with our loved ones. We're quick to restrict their activities to those that we feel are safe or them to practice. We are our brother's keepers, like it or not, and our desire and obligation is to always lead by example, and always give good counsel that promotes obedience to the teachings of the scriptures, for the welfare of our brothers, and for the glory of God. *Become right-minded and stop sinning* is the advice Paul gave the Corinthians, and it's the advice our God, and His Son Jesus, has given to all of us, and now we lovingly give to all of our beloved brothers and sisters.

One last comment. I know that this won't be the popular response that's found in today's seriously damaged churches. Because we've thrown open the doors of our churches to the whole world, regardless of any signs of regeneration, the ideas of the world are the most popular ones heard in the churches. Neither you nor I can change that, but what the body of Christ needs is at least some in every church who know and practice the truth, so **you** be that one in your church. You provide godly counsel, whenever and wherever you get the opportunity, and God will use you for His good works, even if you're the only one there whose doing them. If you love your brothers and sisters, be a godly example to them, and always encourage and admonish them to demonstrate their love of Christ, and one another, by their unwavering obedience to His commandments. That's all any of us can do, God will do the rest. To Him be the glory. Now, the next verse:

Verse 11:

11 But the one who 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.

Again John used both the positive and then the negative aspects to solidify his point. He's just told us that our walking in the light will be an encouragement and demonstration of love to our fellow brethren. Now he uses the converse to say essentially the same thing but from the opposite point of view. That those who walk in darkness, which means those who do not obey the commandments of Christ Jesus, are displaying a hatred for their brothers because they're blind to the truth that saves.

And, there's no affections for them because there's no real family affiliation of the Spirit. John says these don't know where they're going, because the darkness has blinded their eyes. Now while the context supports the idea that they don't know where they're going is referring to their daily actions and behaviors, it can't help but include also the ultimate destination of that blindness as well. John was addressing a Gnostic teaching that had brought tolerance of sin into the churches, so when he says that they are blind, and don't know where they're going, it doesn't escape our notice that this must include the fact that those members of the church who find the continued practice of sin to be acceptable, are blind not only to that truth, but to the truth of their final destination as well. While they sing pretty songs, and presume to worship, they are blindly sinning themselves into the Lake of Fire, and taking all those who follow their lead along with them. This is that case of the blind leading the blind, and both will fall into that eternal trench of destruction.

This is in direct contrast to the previous verse, and makes the authenticity of our love an integral part of the greater aspect of our being in fellowship with Christ, and our walking in the light as He himself is in the light. While these are distinct elements on their own, nevertheless they aren't disconnected from the single source from which they emanate. Either they're all present or they're all missing, it isn't a pick and choose situation, because it's a work of the Holy Spirit dictated by the Father, which produces all of them in progressively growing levels in all of the true believers. Now, I'm going to read the remaining verses of our lesson, and then make a very brief comment.

Verses 12-14:

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. 14 I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

1 John 2:12-14 (NASB)

I've sought to understand the purpose John had in mind for these verses, and read various commentaries on them, but the simple truth is that they're noticeably different than the preceding verses. They're kind of a summation of sorts, explaining why he's written the foregoing things to them, and making observations of their responses. He clearly addresses them in specific age groups, and speaks to them from those perspectives. We can speculate all we want, but in the end we're constrained to accept that all scriptures are inspired by God, so nothing is irrelevant. These verses are an acknowledgment by John that the believers have been forgiven of their sins, they have come to know Him who has been from the beginning, and that knowledge has made them strong against the evil one. This encouragement is a nice oasis to the believers in the midst of his very straightforward teachings on sin and obedience, that are going to continue immediately following this short break in the theme. We'll continue with that in the next lesson.

Conclusion:

John started out describing a progressive sequence of specific things that describe the experience of a Christian. Some are internal and some are external, but both are inextricably linked together. He starts this sequence in chapter one, verse six with what he calls a fellowship with Christ. By which he means a close and intimate relationship whereby we come to know Him and His character and attributes and His desires. If this happens, then there is a resultant impact on the believer, whereby he or she experiences a fundamental change of thinking and priority. And that new nature is in progressively growing conformity to that of Jesus Christ, which affects our entire scope of behaviors and purpose for life.

This new nature earnestly desires to obey God, and walk as Christ himself walked, and has a new love and affection for all those who are of this divine family affiliation. And John has told us in no uncertain terms how to know for sure if such things as these have occurred in us, or if they have not, and the repercussions of both. But he's still not finished, and there's much more to come in this amazing epistle, so we'll continue in our next lesson. To Him alone be all glory and honor. Amen.

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