

1 John Ch2v7-17

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[0 : 00] Good morning.

As you can hopefully see, 1 John chapter 2. If you are using the Red Church Bibles, it's on page 1225.

So just before I read the passage, recently I was at my brother-in-law's wedding. Well, during the ceremony, an extremely wise and well-spoken man spoke about love.

And in particular, the couple's love for each other. Well, this amazingly literate and handsome individual, he pointed out a number of things that the couple have done throughout the years, which show that they love each other.

I hope that anyone that's married here today can think of ways that they and their spouse have shown that they love each other. If you aren't acting on those promises you made on your wedding day, what's the point?

[1 : 26] What does love even mean? The only way to know if you love someone or something is by your actions. How you live reflects what's true in your heart.

Well, today we're going to be looking at how we can be sure of knowing God and loving God through how we live, through our actions. Our assurance of knowing God and experiencing eternal life comes from our obedient living.

Let's dive right in. Just as we begin looking at our passage, let's start with some background to how we got here. The church that are receiving this letter have suffered a drop in numbers because there's false teachers milling around and leading members astray.

The church are finding it tough to stand by what they know to be true. So John writes this letter then to encourage them to stand strong in the faith. Upon reading this letter, the believers would have felt assured of them gaining eternal life.

They would have received the confidence boost they needed that they were on the right path. And that the Jesus they learned about and came to trust on day one is the same Jesus that's ensuring they reach the goal of eternity.

[2 : 40] The first few verses of chapter 2 then are promising that those that know Jesus will be identified by keeping his commands and by not sinning.

So where we begin our passage here in verse 7 is continuing on from there. It's trying to show exactly what keeping God's commands and not sinning looks like. So 1 John chapter 2 verses 7 to 17.

Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one which you have had since the beginning. The old command is the message you have heard.

Yet I am writing you a new command. Its truth is seen in him and in you because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness.

Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness.

[3 : 46] They do not know where they are going because the darkness has blinded them. I am writing to you dear children because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

I am writing to you fathers because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you young men because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you dear children because you know the father.

I write to you fathers because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you young men because you are strong and the word of God lives in you and you have overcome the evil one.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the father is not in them. For everything in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life comes not from the father but from the world.

The world and its desires pass away but whoever does the will of God lives forever. Let's pray.

[4 : 53] Father God, thank you for bringing us all here today. Thank you that you are here with us. And we pray for your message to get across today. Thank you for your Bible, for the teachings that it brings.

And we pray that you are working in everyone's heart to take it in on a Sunday but to practice it then during the week. In Jesus' name, amen.

So this passage that we are looking at today is laid out with one contrast and two battles. The contrast is the new command versus the old command.

And then the battles that we look at a little later are light versus darkness and the world versus the will of God. But the contrast comes first in verses 7 and 8.

John begins by saying he is not writing a new command but an old one. Then in verse 8 he says he is writing a new command. Well, he is not attempting to confuse people here.

[5 : 54] He didn't just get his words mixed up. Listen to verse 8. I am writing you a new command. Its truth is seen in him and you.

Because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. Its truth is seen in him. It's speaking about Jesus. The true light is already shining.

It's speaking about Jesus. John is helping us understand that. The reason this old command is now seen as a new command is because of Jesus. John is taking this train of thought from Jesus himself.

We read in the Gospel of John, written by the same author, in chapter 13 and verse 34, Jesus says, 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. Well, loving one another is not a new command. We see that from the very beginning. But Jesus defines it as a new command by saying, Just as I have loved you.

[7 : 01] Jesus has now lived on this earth and shown us firsthand exactly how humans are supposed to love each other. A couple of weeks ago in Sunday school, we were learning how Jesus is fully God and fully man.

And so he has the authority to say, You love one another by copying me. Well, we obviously need to ask ourselves then, How did Jesus love that's so revolutionary?

What did he do differently to this command of love your neighbor that we see in the Old Testament? Well, I think the answer is twofold. How he loved and who he loved.

So if you're a believer and someone asks you for an example of how Jesus loved, naturally, I would guess most people would go first to the cross. Jesus sacrificed his own life because he loves us so much.

This is what we're called to do in 1 John. To love to the point of sacrifice. Not just to love when it's convenient. To those that are in school or college or the workplace, do you love your classmates and co-workers by telling them about the most important love in the world?

[8 : 21] The love that can save their souls. To those that are married, do you pray for and with your spouse, even when maybe you think they're not living up to their end of the deal? To those that are parents, do you read the Bible and pray with your kids every day, even when you're tired or have a million jobs to do around the house?

True love takes sacrifice. Well, taking a step further in how Jesus loved, we see throughout the Gospels that Jesus was a servant.

When I was in college, every year we used to organize hoodies with a Bible verse on the back. Well, this particular year that I'm thinking of, the Bible verse was Mark 10 45. I brought my friend along to an outreach event and he spotted all our hoodies.

I'll always remember the reference of this famous verse because of him. He said, So tell me, who is this Mark guy? And what did he say at quarter to eleven? So when I hear about servanthood, I always think of Mark 10 45, which says, For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus came with a servant heart. He put others before himself. Even when he was tired from a full day of preaching and loving people, when they needed him, he preached and loved some more.

[9 : 49] If we're going to obey this new command, we need to be servants to one another. The last thing then about the Old Testament command to love your neighbor that Jesus defined more specifically is, Who is my neighbor?

Most of us are probably familiar with the famous verse in Matthew 5 where Jesus tells his disciples to love their enemies. Well, this was a groundbreaking idea at the time because under the Old Covenant, God would have judged Israel's enemies by a number of different ways, but some included using his own people to bring about that justice.

Now Jesus is saying under the New Covenant that it's our job to love our enemies and to leave the judgment to God. Obviously, we still seek justice in this life, but ultimately, if we're wronged, we're called to love, forgive, and to leave the rest in God's hands.

One day in the staff room in school, another teacher snapped at me, and there were some of my colleagues around. I spent the next couple of hours until the day was done thinking about how I was going to approach him and how forcefully I was going to let him know that he was being a prat. Well, thankfully, we didn't cross paths the remainder of the day, and I began thinking on the drive home. A Christian song came on, on my Spotify playlist, and I realized I should include God in my decision on how to handle the situation.

[11 : 23] When I got home, I text him asking if he was all right and apologized if I had unintentionally offended him. He texts back and assured me there were no issues, he was just on edge.

But by choosing to forgive instead of justifiably maybe retaliating, I'm certain I saved myself a lot of strife and dwelling on the situation. I handed it over to God and felt a genuine peace about the whole thing.

Whereas if I didn't forgive and let the injustice fester, I would have a strained work environment probably to this day. I've heard since from other colleagues that this particular individual knows well how to hold a grudge.

But when people wrong us, friend or enemy, we're called to love and forgive and trust God for the rest. The first battle we see in this passage is between light and dark.

The darkness of this world is passing and the true light is already shining. Jesus has already lived on this earth. He has already overcome the evil one by defeating sin and death when he died on the cross and rose again.

[12 : 43] And so we live in an age when the light is shining and we're capable of living in this light. How do we do it? Verse 10, by loving our brothers and sisters.

This is talking specifically about those in the Christian community. The mark of a Christian should be love. When people see Christians of any denomination interacting with each other, they should be overcome by the love shown.

That's why I hate seeing all these debates of theology online. Some of the debates I've seen on Facebook get very heated and it seems to me to be a serious lack of love. I completely understand how people get worked up about certain things and what they feel to be mistakes in people's beliefs or theology, but a social public outlet is not the place for these arguments.

There's great gain to discussing these things and to challenging one another's beliefs and actions, but not on a platform that's open to anyone, not on a platform that could be anonymous, and not on a platform where people's tone can so easily be misconstrued or misinterpreted.

But I've spoken to many visitors to this church and regularly I hear the feedback of how loving and welcoming it is. I hope they're not just saying that because they know I'm a member, but I trust that this is an extremely loving and welcoming church.

[14 : 16] Let's keep it that way. The mark of a true Christian is his love, so be encouraged. Your love is on show every week and is being taken notice of by people who maybe have not experienced the love of Christ yet.

The love that you show, not only here, but throughout the week to your families and friends, is proof that you know God. If you've been in any way unsure of your salvation, let me assure you of it. I see the love you have for your brothers and sisters in Christ and others have seen it too. This is a sure sign that you're walking in the light. As I regularly say at my parent-teacher meetings, keep up the good work.

The second battle we meet is the world versus the will of God. John has spent these last few verses telling us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now he begins verse 15, do not love the world or anything in the world. Anything in the world is not talking about people.

[15 : 31] John has made that very clear that we're to love everyone in the world, even our enemies, and especially other Christians that know God as well. To make abundantly clear that we know what he's talking about, in verse 16, he clarifies what loving the world looks like.

It's giving in to the temptations of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Well, the lust of the flesh is that which we desire in this life.

Primarily, I think he's talking about sexual desires, but also gluttony, having more food and drink than we need, and laziness. How often do you choose to watch TV instead of helping to clean the house?

How often do you allow your kids to go to bed with no Bible or prayer time because you've had a hard day at work? The lust of the eyes, then, is talking about envying that that's not yours.

Do you look at a friend's car and decide you need it? Or an old flame on Facebook and wonder, what if? And finally, then, the pride of life.

[16 : 42] In the ESV, it's translated as pride in possessions. So the pride of life is talking about our possessions, things we own. Do you always boast about how good your job is or how big your house is?

Well, these are the things that happen when we love the world. God is telling us in these few passages to look at the contrast of loving your neighbor and loving the world.

Your actions reflect what and who you love. Only yesterday, Sarah abandoned us for the whole day.

I was left at home with the children on my own. If anyone saw my middle daughter, Emma, this morning, you may have noticed a burn on her face.

I say again, I was left alone with the children. Well, this morning, I was joking with her and I was saying, oh my goodness, what are we going to do? I'm going to be in so much trouble when mommy wakes up and sees what's after happening on her day off.

[17 : 47] Well, Emma showed her love for me when she was like, daddy, it's not your fault. It was the wind's fault. We were having a barbecue. The ash flew into her face.

So she proved her love by her actions. And that's what we're called to do in this passage. If you're putting others first, it's a sure sign that you know God and will experience eternity with him.

However, if you're putting yourself and the desires of this life first, then it's a sure sign of verse 15. Love for the father is not in you.

Everyone struggles with these temptations and no one is without sin. Everyone has given into these temptations. What John is trying to get across is if you are struggling with these temptations, then you can be confident that you know God.

You can be confident that you will live forever with God. It's when you're not struggling that the problem arises. It's when you give in to these temptations time and time again and find yourself not caring.

[18 : 56] That's when the love of God is not in us. There's a song by Florida Georgia line and a line goes, we cuss on them Mondays and pray on them Sundays.

Or bad grammar aside, if that's you, if you go to church on Sundays and by the time Monday comes, you go back to the same old routine of not reading the Bible, not praying, not including God in any situation or any of your decisions, then you need to, as another famous song says, check yourself before you wreck yourself.

That's when a reality check is needed and fast. That's when we need to hit the ground running. If that's you, then get back to reading your Bible daily.

Get back to praying and asking for God's help in identifying these temptations and standing strong against them. Get back to putting others' needs above your own and get back to serving others and sacrificing yourself for them.

Hit the ground running. You don't need to ease yourself back into it. You don't need to try to make yourself just a little bit holier before you turn to God and ask for His forgiveness.

[20 : 14] You need to start afresh right now and get back to doing all those things that you know you should be doing. Jesus sacrificed everything in heaven to come down to this world, to live life as a human and to die at the hands of humans just so you have a chance at a relationship with Him.

Jesus loves you and has proven it by His actions. Jesus loves you and wants you to love Him back. But He's not going to force you.

You need to choose. You need to make the decision to reject the world and love Him. You need to decide whether you will live in the dark or in the light.

Whether you will choose the side of the world or the will of God. Only one of those things lasts forever and has infinite value. Verse 17 The world and its desires pass away but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

When you start putting the will and word of God first in your life then you will experience the assurance of knowing God. When you start loving others and putting their needs ahead of your own then you will experience the assurance of living forever.

[21 : 42] When you start fighting temptation and stop giving in so easily to the desires of this world then you will experience the assurance that your salvation is won already.

You don't do these things to gain salvation but when you do these things the Holy Spirit enables you to have this sure confidence in your eternal life.

so that you can continue to do good things in this world that so desperately needs us. This message goes out to every single person in this room.

Verses 12 to 14 repeat that this message is for children, fathers, young men. This message is for everyone of all ages. John is encouraging everyone to resist temptation and live for Jesus.

The end of verse 14 I write to you because you are strong and the word of God lives in you and you have overcome the evil one.

[22 : 52] The only way to know if you love someone or something is by your actions. How you live reflects what's true in your heart. If you are chasing after the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes or after worldly possessions, your priorities are askew and you need to act fast.

However, if you are fighting temptation, we all give in occasionally, but if you are fighting and struggling against it, if you are sacrificing yourself to serve others, if you are trying desperately to know God better, then you are safe and secure.

Whoever does the will of God lives forever. God has forgiven you, saved you, and has granted you eternal life and nothing you do can lose it.

Live in that freedom today. Live in that freedom this week. As you go into work or as you care for your family this week, love everyone to the best of your ability in the confidence that if you mess something up, nothing can separate you from the love of God and eternal life.

Do everything you can for the eternal kingdom of God, not the temporary fancies of this world. I write to you because you are strong and the word of God lives in you and you have overcome the evil one.

[24 : 28] Your salvation is secure. You have nothing to fear in this temporary world. Eternity is your goal. Let's pray.

Father God, thank you for your word.

Forgive us for the times where we take it for granted. We pray that you help us to use it, avail of it and to do what it says in our everyday lives.

Help us not to leave what you've been talking to us about here this morning, here on Sunday, but to use it in the week ahead. To love others sacrificially, to serve them in the confidence that we're not doing those things to try and earn your favor.

You have already done everything that is necessary. But we do those things because we love you and we want to please you. And we ask you to fill us with the confidence through the power of your Holy Spirit that we are safe and secure.

[25 : 45] That what you say in your word is 100% true. In Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks, Alex. Thank you, Connor.

We're going to respond again in song. So let's stand and sing together. Thank you. Thank you.