

"The Love Test"

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[0:00] If you'd open up your Bibles to 1 John 2, we're going to be spending most of our time in verses 7 through 11. But as you can see on your bulletin, we're going to dip into what Billy preached on verses 3 through 6 for a little bit at the beginning of the sermon.

But let me ask you this. Right now, are you having a hard time loving another Christian? You who are blood-bought, are you having a hard time loving another Christian who's been bought by the blood of Jesus? Maybe there's another Christian who just rubs you raw. You're loud, they're quiet, it drives them crazy. Or maybe someone has repeatedly disappointed you and you have a hard time loving that other Christian. Or maybe you've had ongoing disagreements about politics, about race, about theology, and you've now closed your heart to someone and are having a hard time loving them.

[1:04] Or maybe someone other Christian has repeatedly sinned against you. And it makes it difficult for you to love that person. Essentially, you have closed your heart against another brother or sister in Christ.

And that opens the door to all sorts of other temptations. Complaining, grumbling, gossip, slander, attacking, avoiding, withdrawing, accusing, being quick to judge, and being very slow to believe the best.

So on the outset here, let me ask you this question. Have you closed your heart against another brother or sister in Christ? Is there someone that God is bringing to your mind right now? The book of 1 John contains a series of three tests. The first test is the belief test, the doctrine test. What you believe about Jesus. Fully God, fully man.

The second test is what Billy preached on last week. The obedience test. Obeying all of the commandments of Jesus. All of His word. And this morning, we're going to look at the love test.

[2:16] That we love one another just as God in Christ has loved us. So here's the test. Have you closed your heart against another Christian?

Are you not loving them? Or in the words of John, are you hating them? Christian love is having an open heart towards one another to do good to one another at cost to ourselves, even when someone doesn't deserve it.

So here's the big idea this morning. At the top of your bulletin, we must love all who belong to Jesus. That's what we're going to see in this text. That's what I'm going to make a case for. We must love all who belong to Jesus for reasons why. We must love all who belong to Jesus. And I'm going to bring them all out of, help you to see them out of 1 John 2.

The first reason, Jesus modeled the way we must love. Jesus modeled the way we must love. If you've got a pen in hand, you want to circle Jesus modeled love.

[3:21] Jesus modeled this for us. Last week, Billy showed us from verses 3 through 6 that those born of God will obey His commandments. And this obedient test that we see in verses 3 through 6 is not just obedience to some of Jesus' commands.

It's obedience to all of Jesus' commandments. And if you just look at verse 3 and 4, you will notice that John has commandments in mind. Because there's a little S on the end of commandment. Commandments. We're to obey all of them. We're to keep all of His word. Verse 5. In the Great Commission, Jesus says, Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe, to keep, to obey all that I have commanded. Those born of God have become disciples of Jesus Christ. We are to follow Him in all that He commands, in all of His ways. We are to walk as He walked.

Now, what happens in this passage is we move from verses 3 through 6 into 7 through 11. And we move from this call to obey all of the commandments of Jesus to now narrowing in on one particular commandment of Jesus.

[4:46] If you look at verses, verse 7, I'm writing no new commandment, but an old commandment. The old commandment is the same word that you have heard.

At the same time, this is a new commandment. So, John moves from having all of Jesus' commands to now having one particular command. And it's a whole new love test.

It's a test of love. We move from the obedience test to now another kind of obedience, loving one another. And what John has in mind here is John 13, 34.

Jesus has just washed the feet of His disciples. He says, What we see happening in John 13 is this. Jesus models to His disciples what humble, loving service looks like. And then He says to them in John 13, 34, and 35, Hey, follow my lead.

[5:47] Love as I love. Which is interesting because in verses 5 and 6 of chapter 2, we read, Whoever keeps His word in Him, truly the love of God is perfected.

By this we may know that we are in Him. Whoever says He abides in Him, in Jesus, ought to walk in the same way in which He walked. In other words, we are to love in the same way that He loved. Jesus modeled this love for us in humble service, humble loving service. But the ultimate place that Jesus demonstrated this love is, of course, on the cross.

Where He sacrificially gave Himself for the good of us, even when we didn't deserve it. Christian love is a sacrificial commitment to do good to others, even when they don't deserve it.

That's what Jesus modeled. Jesus modeled. He didn't model this closed-hearted against you. He modeled open-hearted for you.

[6:56] So let's just apply this quickly. First is this. I just want you to see coming out of verses 3 through 6, that loving one another is part of obeying all that Jesus commands, and it's a matter of discipleship.

This is about following Jesus. This is about being like our Savior and our Lord. The second point of application is this.

It's a question. Who are you looking to as a model of loving others? When you think about, I need to love other people, who are you looking to as your model?

Maybe you're not even asking the question. So start asking the question. But look to Jesus to see how He loved others.

His way is the way we must walk. Jesus modeled the way we must love. That's why we must love all who belong to Jesus.

[8:01] The second reason why we must love all who belong to Jesus is that we are the beloved of Jesus ourselves.

Would you circle that word beloved, and then right next to it, write, me, question mark. Are you the beloved of God?

There's no question in chapter 2, verse 7, when John writes, Beloved, I'm writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment. Beloved. There's no question that this frequent term of endearment is John's pastoral affection for these churches in the first century, western Turkey. No question. He loves these Christians. If anything, it shows his heart is open to them. He wants good for them.

But the question I want to ask is, why does John love them so much? Because John knows that there is someone who loves them more than him.

[9:18] That they're not only the beloved of John, they're the beloved of Jesus. Jesus loves them.

Brothers and sisters, our great triune God sought us from before the foundation of the world out of love.

He loves us with all that he is. All that God is, he is for you, brothers and sisters.

The three persons of the Trinity all work in concert with one another with an open heart for your good. Lord, you are the object of the triune God's open-hearted, unceasing love, beloved.

I want to press this in a little bit. I want to help you sink, this sink in. I want you to soak in this for a little bit because many of you have a hard time believing that God loves you.

[10:32] Many of you think God doesn't care about you. He doesn't see you. Many of you think that you need to walk in eggshells around your Holy Father.

Both couldn't be further from the truth. You know when God started to love you? God started to love you before the foundation of the world.

He set his love on you way back then. His love for you didn't start the moment you heard the gospel for the first time. His love for you goes way back.

And the extent of his love for you that he would send his only son to die in your place so that you could take your place in his family as a beloved son or daughter in love he predestined us for adoption.

Beloved sons and daughters. How does God love you? He loves you non-stop. This past week when you were at your best and you're like I'm crushing it as a Christian God wasn't all that impressed but he loved you still.

[11:57] His love for you isn't dependent on your obedience. He loves you with a fierce love for your good. You know what your greatest good is? God. He loves you unto himself.

But this past week when you were at your worst when you were in the depths of your shame when you were taken over by fear when you just committed that sin again when you were living in the soft denial of God's existence because you're just consumed with yourself God never stopped loving you.

Yes your sin still grieves him and yes he loves you still. he will never abandon you brother or sister in Christ.

He doesn't turn his love for you on and off. He loves you incessantly. So brother or sister beloved of God if you are a genuine believer in Christ you cannot out sin God's outrageous love.

You can't out sin it. you can't check this out. Do you know how hard of a time you have accepting God's love?

[13:35] Here's how hard a time you have. The Holy Spirit who dwells in you is seeking to convince you of that regularly that you are a child of God.

He bears witness to your spirit that you belong to God. In fact at the end of Ephesians 3 the apostle Paul prays to the father to send the spirit afresh to strengthen the Christians in Ephesus with the power of the Holy Spirit so that Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith that they would be rooted and grounded in love.

love so that they would comprehend the height depth breadth and length of God's love for them so that they would be filled with the fullness of God and his love for them.

It's a ongoing active ministry of the Holy Spirit in which the Holy Spirit is seeking to convince you that you are God's beloved. Your son and his daughter.

Here's why this matters. When you are personally affected and filled up by God's great outrageous love for you in Christ, when you realize the greatness of God's open hearted love for you and you didn't deserve it, how can you keep your heart closed against another Christian?

[15:05] If you see and experience God's great love for you, how can you hate somebody else that he loves? 1 John 4 19 says, we love because he first loves us.

Is God bringing someone to your mind? The cure for a Christian's closed hearted hatred is God's open hearted love for you in Christ.

We must love those who belong to Jesus because we are the beloved of Jesus. Reason three, Jesus is commanding us to love now.

circle that word commanding and now. Remember back in verses three through six and verses three through four in particular the obedience test commandments is in the plural and here in verses seven and eight the focus narrows from commandments in general to a commandment in particular and the commandment that I'm trying to argue for that John has in mind is this command Jesus saying I give you a new commandment that you love one another just as I have loved you you love one another but here's what's interesting in verse seven John says I'm 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 old commandment what are you talking about I thought this is the

new commandment what's going on well as often in the case of your bible what you need to do when you have a question about one sentence or one statement you look right around to see if there's an explanation so if you turn to first

John three eleven here's what we read for this is the message that you have heard from the beginning that we should love one another a new commandment I give to you that you love one another what John is saying is that the new commandment Jesus gave back way back then is now an old commandment to these Christians they heard it from the beginning not in the beginning Genesis 1 1 but the beginning of their journey with Jesus when they first heard about God's great love for them in Christ who sacrificially gave himself to them when they didn't deserve it when that began and then they were awakened and realized their sin they were also taught that they were to love one another so what John is saying here is this old commandment stuff nothing new it's like he's saying I'm not writing anything you don't already know this is not novel this is not some fresh take on something rather this is basic following of

[18:23] Jesus discipleship 101 you know this this is what we were taught from the beginning and in verse 8 he says this at the same time it's a new commandment in one sense this commandment is old this is this is 2,000 years old for us now but in another sense it's new and it's always new because this command to love one another must always govern our relationships with one another maybe thinking of that word new as now would help beloved at the same time it's a now commandment that I'm writing to you which is true in Jesus and in you Jesus lived it and you must walk in the way that

Jesus walked it must be true of you we brothers and sisters must always have an open heart towards one another for each other's good even when we don't deserve it so the old Jesus gives this command nearly 2,000 years ago the new it's to be obeyed today this is a commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ to each of us today I find myself asking this question why does this commandment rise to its own test in the book of 1 John in John 13 35 I think we are given the answer remember John 13 34 is Jesus giving the new commandment a new commandment I give to you love one another just as I have loved you love one another and 35 says this by this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another why is this why does this rise to its own test because our credibility and

Christ's reputation rides on our ability to love one another and if we don't we blend in with the darkness in 1 John 3 13 John tells this church why are you surprised that you're being hated by the world the world hates Jesus but also hate you so if you're not loving your brother you're more like the world so this causes us to stand out the new commandment that's being given here is a new commandment for a new age look at verse 8 at the same time it's a new commandment that I'm writing you which is true in him and in you because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining just one quick note see the darkness is passing away flip to now first John 2 17 and the world is passing away along with its desires darkness in the world we're talking about the same realm the same domain people living in darkness when Jesus came he lived a perfect life he died a substitutionary death and he was raised from the dead and at that moment there was this new dawning of a new age the true light is shining Jesus God is light 1st John 1 5 life our Lord Jesus is shining now in between his first coming and when he comes back and it will all be lit up at that point the light is shining in the darkness is a reference to Jesus and if we belong to Jesus if we abide in Jesus if Jesus is our life he's our vine we can do nothing apart from him when we love each other it shines in the darkness it lights up the place and by contrast to that is the darkness that is passing away and what we'll see in a little bit is that that is marked by hate hate for those who belong to Jesus brothers and sisters now is the time to love one another with a Christ like love is God bringing someone to your mind he's commanded you to love everyone who belongs to him and when we love everyone who belongs to Jesus we light it up we bear testimony it it validates that we belong to Jesus and that Jesus has actually come so the question is what does this look like what is loving some other

[23:57] Christian look like well if you flip back in first John chapter three in verse sixteen through eighteen we have a specific example of how some Christians are to love other Christians maybe better yet how not to love them by this we know love that Jesus laid down his life for us and we

ought to lay down our lives for the brothers but if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need yet closes his heart against him how does God's love abide in him little children let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth so the situation going on there what John is addressing is hey if you Christians who have the world's goods you're not living in want you have your needs met and more if you come across another brother or sister in Christ and they're in need they're in material need but you're like whatever it raises the question if you belong to

Jesus what I want to help you see is the heart situation because this is an example but there's a heart situation going on here that applies to a variety of other examples did you notice verse 17 but if anyone has the world's good and sees his brother in need yet closes his heart against him that is an unloving hateful posture of heart that leads to gossip slander imputing motives divisiveness splits departures the tearing apart of God's body instead of the building up and unifying of it brothers and sisters God doesn't love you with a close heart he loves you with an open heart to do you good even when we don't deserve it how can we close our hearts to other brothers and sisters in

Christ whom God loves don't close your heart to another Christian who has hurt you don't close your heart to another Christian who is regularly disappointing you don't close your heart to someone who is frequently disappointing you criticizing you or judging you love them the temptation when you're sinned against or when you have your expectations not met is to close your heart to avoid to get angry to be frustrated to withdraw yourself withdraw good from somebody else to withdraw your trust to close your affections to close down giving the benefit of the doubt to close down extending grace that's not the new commandment that's hate and the cure for your closed heart toward a fellow

Christian is God's opened heart to you in Christ think about that is God bringing someone to your mind another Christian if he is and you've realized you're hating them you've closed your heart to them first step repent turn to your loving father and you say 1 John 1 9 you confess same word God I'm not loving them I'm hating them please please forgive me cleanse me change me that's where you start because your love is God's love being perfected and after you've confessed you've got to ask questions like this do I need to seek somebody's forgiveness or do I need to forgive someone is there someone

I need to go to and ask one of these questions are we okay because you seem a little icy or maybe you need to be honest you know three years ago when he punched me in the face I've not gotten over it but I want to be loving you do you have a next step this new commandment is a now commandment we must love everyone who belongs to Jesus because Jesus is commanding us to love now the fourth reason is that Jesus delivered us from the darkness into his light we see that in verses 9 through 11 it's this contrast between those who are currently living in the light who belong to Jesus who are loving those who belong to Jesus and those who are currently walking in the darkness because they don't belong to

[29:40] Jesus and they're hating those who belong to Jesus our love for one another is proof that we have been delivered from the kingdom of the beloved sun the true light shining there is this old commercial in the 80s by Wendy's there's this old lady that when she encountered a hamburger that didn't have much beef would say where's the beef where's the love love if you profess verse nine to be a follower of Jesus to walk in the light and you have no love in verse 10 we read this in him the one who is walking in the light loving those who belong to

Jesus is no cause for stumbling and what's getting at is that when we walk in the light by loving one another we're going to avoid sinning we've been given sight we know where we're going we're following after Jesus and what he where he walks what he says we follow and we do and so when we're walking in the light we are seeking to avoid sinning seeking to avoid stumbling and causing other people to stumble so when you love someone else another Christian is it your goal to help them not sin here in first John chapter two verse one we see John's love doing that my little children I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin that's love in contrast to verse 10 verse 11 points to the dark side if you hate someone who belongs to

Jesus if you're closing your heart against someone Jesus has shed his blood for whether that's because they are on the different side of a political spectrum or whether that's because they have different thoughts than you about racism or they are immature you don't like their personality they have a different theological stance their weaknesses drive you crazy their past mistakes their poor choices they've got bad manners they have different preferences they've sinned against you and you hate them for it if you are hating someone Jesus has died for you need to be warned because you may still be walking in darkness verse 9 says it is possible for people to profess to be in the light yet hate in the dark closing your heart against a brother or sister in

Christ blinds you how can God's life giving love dwell in you if you are hating the very ones God is loving are you calling God's beloved the behated and if you are you are obviously walking in darkness not knowing where you're going you're not obeying Jesus or walking in the way in which he walked and so if you're consumed with hatred with someone else there are two explanations possible explanations for that one is this you're not a believer you're not a Christian you're in the dark you're walking in darkness and the response to that is to see Jesus being offered to you by God the Father and to run to him to repent of your hatred and call on

Jesus to forgive you for your sins option two you are a Christian who's closed their heart and it reveals your need to confess your sin confess your hatred confess it for what it is it is a breach of the new commandment you are disobeying Jesus and it's grievous to God you are stumbling and you're causing other people to stumble and you need to stop and repent of that confess it repent of it and what you'll find is grace cleansing forgiveness in the blood of Jesus in verses 9 through 11 we have two kingdoms on display the kingdom of light and the king is the true light shining Jesus darkness marked by our love for one another and the other kingdom is the kingdom of darkness and we all know who that ruler is the liar from the beginning marked by hatred for

[35:17] God's beloved your love for other Christians reveals your kingdom who you're living for and Jesus delivered us from the darkness into his light and if we're in the light we love let me wrap this up I've sought to make a case this morning I sought to give you four reasons why we must love everyone who belongs to Jesus because Jesus modeled it he modeled love to us we in fact are the beloved of Jesus we are commanded by Jesus to love now it's not some kind of old commandment that doesn't apply it applies now it's not an option and forth in his love he delivered us from darkness and into his kingdom of light has God brought someone to your mind if he has don't ignore it the cure for your closed hearted hate is

God's open hearted love for Christ for you in Christ this is the love test we've been examined how are you faring if you need to confess go to your father who loves you find fresh forgiveness and cleansing stop hating start loving out of obedience to Jesus let's pray God I've seen hate in my heart this week spirit of God thank you so much for showing me that in spirit of God I pray that you would do a thorough work in us where we're honest about what is in our hearts towards other brothers and sisters sisters and that God you would bring us to a point of seeing it for what it is confessing it as it is and repenting of it

God we ask that you would pour out your spirit on us that you would convince us of your great love for us that you would expose our hatred for others and change us into the image of Jesus who is the ultimate lover of our soul help us Lord Jesus help us in your name we pray amen