

Fellowship: the Love Test
1 John 2:7-11

February 18, 2007

A. Introduction

- 1. the Life of the World
 - a. John 8:12:
 - b. Matthew 5:14, 16:

2. The Text emphasizes

B. The Text and the Context

- 1. John 15:12, John 13:34-35 — Christ taught the new command ...
- 2. 1 John 1:5, 2:8 — related to darkness ...
- 3. 1 John 2:4, 9; Luke 6:46 — related to our words ...
- 4. 1 John 2:6, 8; John 13:34 — related to Christ's ...

C. The love command is old, though new 1 John 2:7-8a

- 1. called new by Jesus, John 13:34
- 2. but also old, because
 - a. 1 John 1:1 — it is part of
 - b. Leviticus 19:18 — it is

D. The love command brings the light 1 John 2:8b

- 1. in the person of Jesus Christ
 - a. John 15:13 — it is based on
 - b. Luke 23:34 — it was also shown
- 2. in our lives
 - a. Romans 6:14 — since
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 — we are

E. The love command address our attitude towards our brother as we read in 1 John 2:9-11

- 1. should we limit the word brother?
- 2. Romans 13:8-10 — what limits does Paul place on showing love?

F. The love command makes us a stepping-stone, not as stumbling-block; see 1 John 2:10

- 1. what way is the idea of 'stumbling-block' used in
 - a. 1 Corinthians 1:23?
 - b. Luke 7:23?
 - c. Romans 4:13?

G. The love command demonstrates spiritual sight instead of blindness (as expressed in negative terms in) 1 John 2:11

- 1. 2 Peter 1:7-9 — can Christians be spiritually blind at times?
- 2. How does this happen

H. Conclusion: I want to specifically apply this command ...

A. Introduction

1. The Light of the World

a. with all that is going on in the world

- (A) with terrorism, calamities, pressures of life, sickness
- (B) men and women are looking for answers
- (C) seeking for light at the end of the tunnel
- (D) many find themselves in a situation like ...

b. Jack Jones —{2}.

- (A) was a Welsh coal miner's son. In his autobiography, 'Unfinished Journey', he tells about a terrifying incident that occurred when he was a boy. He was in a mine shaft when something went wrong, and the men were obliged to find another way out.
- (B) They struggled through a labyrinth of old workings and a stagnant pond. Jack's father, one of the best miners and a devoted parent, took Jack on his back and led his fellow miners over dangerous ground. In the foul air, the flames of their open lamps began to weaken. "Careful, son, you hold fast round Dad's neck," his father said as they reached the dark water. Slowly he was tracing his way through the murky water which was almost up to his chest.
- (C) Across the water, they started up a steep incline. "Won't be long now," he said. After they had climbed for some time, he stopped, knelt and pointed. "Look, son."
- (D) Jack saw what seemed to be a bright disc, about the size of a half dollar, on top of what appeared to be a distant mountain.
- (E) "That's what we've been looking for, son — the light of the world. Come on!" And the light grew in size as they climbed their way to the world's surface.

c. so people are looking for a light to climb to safety

- (A) but they are looking in all the wrong places
- (B) in false teaching, in false science, in false religions
- (C) why are they not looking in the place where the truth may be found, where the light exists, in the church?
- (D) hear what Jesus Christ says to us, His disciples,

- (1) "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12 NAS), and,
 - (2) "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ... Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:14, 16 NAS)
- (E) why are people not looking to us for the light, for the answer? Is it because we have failed to be the replicas of the true Light as we ought?
- (F) John addresses this concern in our text today:

2. Text, 1 John 2:7–11:

- a. ⁷ Beloved, I am not writing a new command to you, but an old command which you had from the beginning. ⁸ Again, I am writing a new command to you which is found to be true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is shining already. ⁹ Anyone who keeps claiming to be in the light and keeps hating his brother is still in the darkness. ¹⁰ The one who keeps loving his brother keeps abiding in the light, and there is no cause of offence in him: ¹¹ But he who keeps hating his brother is in the darkness and in the darkness he keeps walking and does not know where he is going because the darkness blinded his eyes.
- b. though it is monotonous, I have deliberately kept on using the word 'keeps' in this reading
- (A) because that is the meaning in these verses
 - (B) they speak about our continuing practice
 - (1) not about an incident of hatred in the past that has been dealt with
 - (2) not about an act of love once shown
 - (3) not about an experience of abiding once known
 - (C) but about our everyday Christian walk; our way of life
 - (D) if we, both as individuals, and as a local church, were to practice each and every day what is in these verses
 - (E) then we will indeed shine forth a light here in Aurora

3. Concerning this love command we shall see

- a. it is old, though new

- b. it brings the light
- c. it addresses our attitude to our brother
- d. it makes us a stepping-stone, not a stumbling-block
- e. it demonstrates spiritual sight instead of blindness

4. but first, let us look at

B. The Text and the Context

1. our text agrees with John's record of Christ's teachings
 - a. its relationship to this morning's Scripture reading, John 15:8–17, is quite clear; particularly to Jesus' words in verse 12: "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you." (NAS)
 - b. but we could equally well have used the last part of John 13 where in verse 34 Jesus says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (NAS) and then continues in verse 35, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (NAS)
 - c. so John's 'new command' is seen to be the love command from Christ
2. as well, our text today is directly connected to the teaching in first John which we have considered over the past few weeks
 - a. One: the struggle between darkness and light continues
 - (A) we have learned from 1 John 1:5b "... that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all." (NAS)
 - (B) and in here in verse 8, "... the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining." (NAS)
 - (C) taking place in and around each of us is this struggle between darkness on the one hand, representing evil, falsehood, Satan, and light on the other, representing good, truth, God
 - b. Two: actions, not words, reveal what we really are
 - (A) from last week, 1 John 2:4 can be rendered, " Anyone who keeps claiming, 'I have come to know Him', and yet does not keep on obeying His commands, such a one is a liar in whom the truth has

no place in his life;”

- (B) verse 9 says: “Anyone who keeps claiming to be in the light and keeps hating his brother is still in the darkness.”
 - (C) so Jesus challenges us: “And why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46 NAS)
 - (D) it is actions, not words, show whether or not we are in fellowship with God; not profession, but possession
- c. Three: this text is part of following Christ’s example
- (A) last week’s text concluded, “the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.” (1 John 2:6 NAS)
 - (B) and in verse 8: “On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, ...” (NAS) here Jesus’ words of John 13:34, already quoted, are applied “love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another”
 - (C) the love command is part of following His example
- d. so, as a test of fellowship, John now turns from the matter of obedience to the commands of God in general, to the matter of obedience to the love command in particular

- C. The love command is old, though new 1 John 2:7–8a
1. “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. On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, ...” (NAS)
 2. this teaching is from the teachings of Jesus
 - a. John begins this book by saying he is going to teach from his personal experience, 1 John 1:1 “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life—” (NAS)
 - b. and today’s command is likewise, “Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; ...” (1 John 2:7a NAS)
 - c. so John’s teaching has the full authority of Jesus Christ

3. We have already noted John did not originate this command
 - a. it was part of what Jesus Himself taught
 - b. in fact it is part of God's whole revelation, of the Bible
 - c. it is found in the Old as well as the New Testament
 - d. Leviticus 19:18b: "... you shall love your neighbour as yourself; I am the Lord." (Leviticus 19:18 NAS)
 - when asked for the greatest command, Jesus insisted on giving not one but two; this being the second ... why He did this will become apparent as we look further into first John
 - e. so this is a truth from eternity, a facet of the attributes of God, being manifest in time in the incarnation of the Son, revealed in the gospel, the good news of the kingdom

4. Jean Calvin comments, 'the gospel ought not to be received as a doctrine lately born, but what has proceeded from God, and is his eternal truth; as though he {John} had said, "Ye ought not to measure the antiquity of the gospel which is brought to you, by time; since therein is revealed to you the eternal will of God: not only then has God delivered to you this rule of a holy life, when ye were first called to the faith of Christ, but the same has always been prescribed and approved by him." And, doubtless, this only ought to be deemed antiquity, and deserves faith and reverence, which has its origin from God. For the fictions of men, whatever long prescription of years they may have, cannot acquire so much authority as to subvert the truth of God.' ^{-{3}}. – let false teachers beware who seek to repudiate the words of the apostle John!

D. The love command brings the light 1 John 2:8b

1. "... 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." (1 John 2:8 NAS)
2. the love command is founded squarely on Christ's work
 - a. we read these words in our Scripture reading, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13 NAS)
 - b. and it is Jesus Christ who is the Light of the world, the One to whom men must seek if they are to find the Truth
 - c. the love command was first fulfilled in Christ; even as He hung upon the cross for mankind's sin, He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34)

- d. so that man can come into the “light of the glorious gospel”
- e. we see, than, that the new commandment
 - (A) is true in Him
 - (B) as evidenced by the approaching defeat of darkness, of evil, of Satan
 - (C) and Jesus, as the true Light, is already shining, having been lifted up and glorified and exalted
- f. but, what is true in the spiritual realms in Christ Jesus

3. is also to be true in our individual lives

- a. it is the intent of God that through the gospel
 - (A) through the indwelling Holy Spirit
 - (B) through the Advocacy of the Son with the Father
- b. darkness should be defeated in our lives, so that even now “sin shall not be master over you” (Romans 6:14)
- c. in speaking of Christ’s return, Paul says “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;” (1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 NAS)
- d. believers are to reflect the character of their Saviour, of their heavenly Father, to be children of the Light

4. it is obedience to the love command that dispels the darkness

E. The love command addresses our attitude towards our brother as we read in verses 9-11

- 1. “The one who ... hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the light ... the one who hates his brother is in the darkness”
- 2. now, it is very tempting to limit this word ‘brother’
 - a. indeed, in the command of Christ to His disciples, it is plain that foremost is the intention of the love that is to be shown within the believing community for each other
 - b. Christ’s purpose is that the world recognize those who are truly His disciples; that they see true Christianity; visible, real Christianity; that they see Christianity in action
 - c. but if we limit the love command to fellow believers, then Christ’s parable of the good Samaritan should bring us up short as it answers the question, ‘who is my neighbour?’ for it equally well answers, ‘who

is my brother?’

3. from a legalistic standpoint a person could argue
 - a. a distinction between a brother and a neighbour, or
 - b. a difference between the love command and the command to love one’s neighbour as oneself
 - c. I doubt that he would have much success in God’s court
 - d. for Paul, in arguing how the Christian should live, and in speaking of the second table of the law, uses these words: “... for he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law. ... Love does no wrong to a neighbour; love therefore is the fulfilment of the law.” (Romans 13:8b, 10 NAS)
 - e. this is the love that the world wants to see if it is to be convinced that Christianity is real; so ...

F. This love command makes us a stepping-stone, not a stumbling-block 1 John 2:10

1. “The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him.” (NAS)
2. the term “stumbling-block” is used in the Scriptures
 - a. occasionally in a legitimate sense as when Paul says, “but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness,” (1 Corinthians 1:23 NAS)
 - b. more often in prohibitions as in Jesus’ words, “And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me.” (Luke 7:23 NAS)
 - c. or Paul’s, “rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother’s way.” (Romans 4:13 NAS)
3. a stumbling-block is literally a snare, something that may
 - a. lead a fellow-Christian astray
 - b. cause an unbeliever to reject the invitation of the gospel
 - c. and those who fulfill the love command will, in so doing, avoid these dangers

G. This love command demonstrates spiritual sight instead of blindness (as expressed in negative terms in)

- 1 John 2:11
1. “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." (NAS)

2. now it is a sad fact, but true, that even genuine born again believers can be in this state of blindness
 - a. it is not God's will or purpose
 - b. yet Peter affirms that this is the case ... "Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence ... knowledge ... self-control ... perseverance ... godliness ... brotherly kindness, and ... love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins." (2 Peter 1:7-9 NAS)
 - c. so such blindness can come to the one who has been saved, has been purified from his sins ... how?
 - d. because he neglects to remember what Jesus has done
 - e. because he fails to respond to the love of Jesus with love for the world for which Jesus died
 - f. I found this quote by Pastor Don Horban to be incisive: "when you came to Christ your decision was not just about Jesus but about all those who bear His name" ^{-(4)}}.

H. Conclusion

1. why have this test of fellowship?
 - a. that the true believer may have assurance of his or her standing in relationship to God through Christ, and,
 - b. that the person with false assurance may be alerted to their true situation before God
2. but also, that the people in the midst of whom we live may be drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ by the love they see in us

1. © 2007 by Garth Hutchinson, Faith Fellowship Baptist Church of Aurora (Ontario): may be distributed or quoted freely, only let this be done to the glory “of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

Various English versions of the Holy Bible are used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in [square brackets]. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
NAS	New American Standard version © 1975 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com. Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick's database are identified by “Kerux” followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. “That’s What We’ve Been Looking For – Light!” from a message by Norm Lawson – Kerux illustrations 17335
3. Calvin’s Commentaries, *in loc*
4. “Learning to Live in the Love of God” by Don Horban – Kerux sermons #11625