

1John 2:7-11

In the 60's Jackie DeShannon had a hit song called

What the World Needs Now Is Love - It went something like this

Lord we don't need another mountain – we have enough mountains

Lord we don't need another meadow – we have enough meadows

What the world needs now is love, sweet love

That's the only thing that there's just too little of

What the world needs now is love, sweet love

No not just for some, but for everyone

John is saying

Brothers we don't need another program – we have enough programs

Brothers we don't need a new teaching – we know what we need to know

What the church needs now is love, sweet love

That's the only thing that there is just too little of

What the church needs now is love sweet love

No not just for some, but for everyone

In his book – The Church at the End of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Frances Schaeffer calls love - 'The mark of the Christian'

His premise is based upon John 13

Where Jesus says to His disciples

A new command I give to you; Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

All men will know that you are My disciples if you love one another.

Schaeffer's point is this

It is only as we demonstrate love for each other

Will the world be attracted to Jesus Christ

The elders don't want SBF to be known only for our theology

Although our theology should be spot on –

We want the body to know the truth and speak the truth

And of course more importantly to live the truth

We want SBF simply to be known as a place where people love each other

In the Book of Revelation

Jesus commended Ephesus for their theology and their endurance

They knew their theology - they tested every word spoken by a teacher  
And they suffered - they endured persecution and never wavered  
Yet in spite of that He threatens to remove their lamp-stand – why  
Because they had mistaken theology for relationship  
They lacked love  
They had lost their first love – which is for Jesus  
Now listen – when we lose our first love  
When we are not filled with the Holy Spirit we will be filled with self  
So loss of love for Jesus will always precede lack of love for others  
That is just the way it is  
And Christ’s great desire for us is that we be known for our love  
He loves theology – after all it is His truth  
But theology doesn’t take the Gospel to anyone  
It doesn’t reach out a hand and help someone in need  
The love of God in us does that  
So Frances Schaeffer agrees with John - who agrees with Jesus  
Love is the activity that distinguishes the church from the world  
Now it not only distinguishes the church from the world  
Love lets believers know they are Christians  
And love lets Christians know they are in fellowship with God  
This is John’s second test of faith  
We studied the first test last week – the moral test  
The test of increasing righteousness  
As you walk as Christ walked  
You will begin to display the character of Jesus in your life  
That’s test number one  
And you may know that you are truly saved – walking with God  
When you find yourself loving others for whom Christ died  
Now we are not the easiest group to love – look around  
Not many wise – not many noble – not many strong  
Christ chooses the wounded and the weak to build His church  
Has from the beginning  
This was in today’s Our Daily Bread

Someone once asked Francis of Assisi how he was able to accomplish so much. He replied, “This may

be why: The Lord looked down from heaven and said, 'Where can I find the weakest littlest man on earth?' Then He saw me and said, 'I've found him. I will work through him, and he won't be proud of it. He'll see that I am only using him because of his insignificance.'"

That is Biblical – God said His strength is perfected in our weakness

I was listening to an evangelist and he said someone complained

“Christianity is nothing but a crutch”

He responded – “That’s not true – it’s more like a whole hospital”

Jesus loves the downtrodden

The problem with the weak and the wounded is this

Quite often the more someone needs love the harder it is to love them

But the Holy Spirit and the church work together to heal the body of Christ

Christians loving Christians is the theme of John’s next section

This is John’s second test of salvation

Do you claim to know God and yet you do not love fellow believers

John says - you have a problem - let’s look at our text

First John gives us the Law of Love (READ 7,8)

In the moral test John told His readers to keep Christ’s commandments

This was a general statement

Now John lets us know that

Christ’s specific commandment we are to keep is love

If a person has a relationship with God

He will keep Christ’s commandments

Jesus great commandment to the church - is that we love one another

This isn’t new - love is an old commandment

John says - This command is one which has been from the beginning

The command to love existed before Christ’s coming

In its simplest form it is stated in Leviticus 19

Love your neighbor as yourself

That is the verse Jesus was referring to when He said that

Loving your neighbor is the second greatest commandment

The greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul and all your strength

And loving your neighbor as yourself is number 2

Which of course only makes sense

For the Ten Commandments can easily be broken down

Into loving God – the first five and loving others – the second five

Paul wrote – Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another, for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the Law. For thus “you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet”, and if there is any other commandment it is summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”. Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the Law.

There is an inseparable link between obedience - loving God

And loving one’s neighbor

That is why Paul declares that love is the fulfillment of the Law

Obedience to the law of love has been God’s test from the beginning

Love is an old commandment and yet –

Love is a new commandment

John says I am not writing something new to you - and yet I am  
The command to love is new because Jesus gave it an entirely new emphasis

Jesus teaching and His example has lifted love to a whole new level

The newness of the teaching is found in how Christ illustrated it in His life

Even though the Old Testament taught the duty of love

Never had love been so perfectly manifested as it was in the life of Jesus

So the newness is not in the command – it’s always been there

The newness is in the depth of meaning given to us by Christ

By living a life of love

Jesus gave the world insight into the true nature of the Father

In the upper room just hours before His death

Jesus promised His disciples that He wasn’t going to leave them alone

He would prepare a place for them - this place would be with Him

And He would send His Holy Spirit to help them until He returned for them

This was a reflection of His divine love for them

But of course He displayed love that night most dramatically

By washing His disciples feet

And after He had washed their feet He made this pronouncement

You call Me Lord and Teacher, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and Teacher washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you should also do as I did to you. If you know these things, blessed are you if you - do them.

Jesus ministry in the upper room most demonstrated the heart of God

Love is a new commandment because of Jesus unselfish life

It is also fresh because of its manifestation in the lives of believers

We call what God is like - His attributes

Some of His attributes we call communicable

Some we call incommunicable

Communicable means that we are somewhat like that

Incommunicable means that we are nothing like that

For instance – God is eternal omnipotent omniscient and omnipresent

He has always been – He has all power and knowledge – He is everywhere

Those are incommunicable attributes – we are not any of those

God is love – God is just – God is kind

We are something like that

When we received the Holy Spirit we received God

Having God we are able to more fully display His communicable attributes

Now God's primary communicable attributes are His holiness and His love

When you were saved the Holy Spirit took up residence in your life

Now listen to what Paul has to say

Rom 5 – The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

God's love is in us and

As we walk in the Spirit

God's love in us going out to others is a glorious demonstration

Of what it means to be a new creation in Christ

As God transforms us we increasingly evidence the character of Christ

That means we love more

And the evidence of increasing love is increasing humility

One of the marks of a transformed life is that we go from self-centered

Life is all about me – my will my way my hopes my dreams my problems

To being concerned about - and living for - others

It's really rather simple

When you are in Christ, abiding in Him, living for Him

Letting His love flow through you

The people of Christ will grow in importance

Christ and His church will increase – you will decrease

Paul writing to the Philippians – Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, manifesting the same love. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind, let each of you regard one another as more important than himself. – That is the Christian life

And of course – who was like that – and who are we to imitate – Jesus

John 13 – A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another

Get down to the root of that statement and we see that

Love is to be the believer's way of life (READ 9-11)

Love is so intrinsic to who Jesus is

That John can apply the amount of love we show to others as a test

If you say that you are abiding in Christ – that you are walking in the Light

And you do not have love

You have grown so used to the darkness that it seems like light to you

If you are abiding in Christ you will love fellow believers

If you do not love fellow believers you are not abiding in Christ

You see when Christ is living through you – not in you but through you

You will love fellow believers simply because Jesus loves them

Those who love God and obey His Word

Express selfless love to other believers

They are the ones who are walking in the light

Gnostic teaching with its hidden knowledge allowed for sin

Those who followed it sinned and they encouraged others to sin

The truly transformed don't cause others to fall – rather

The redeemed help those who are struggling

And restore those who have fallen

A person who loves will not cause other believers to sin

But rather he will help those who are captive to sin – that's point number 1

Then in Romans Paul writes that loving Christians sacrifice

To help someone who is not as strong in the faith

Rom 15 – Those of us who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those who are without strength, and not just please ourselves. For even Christ did not please Himself

And in 1Cor he shows us how Rom 15 might work out in practice

He gives the example of a stronger Christian

Who understands grace and its freedom

Denying himself to help someone weaker in the faith

A new Christian just freed from paganism would want nothing to do with its practices

So he might be devastated by a Christian's eating meat sacrificed to idols

So Paul says don't eat it – not because it is sin in itself

But when you cause your weaker brother to sin – you are sinning as well

1Cor 8 – Take care lest your liberty somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. When someone weak observes you, you could ruin the brother for whose sake Christ died. And thus by sinning against the brethren, and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.

So don't be the cause of your Christian brother or sister's stumbling

For if you cause another believer to sin you are sinning

Finally John strongly states that

Anyone who hates his brother is walking in sin

They might be saved – but they are walking in darkness

Your brother means those in the body of Christ – your eternal family

Now you may say – I don't hate anyone particularly anyone in the church

But I do know this one Christian whose an idiot

Now John's statement about hate

Has to be understood in light of what Jesus says

Matt 5 – You have heard it said that you shall not commit murder. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty, and whoever is angry enough to say "Raca", shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

Raca means empty headed or fool – it is basically a term of contempt

Now those who believed they had special knowledge

Were looking at those who didn't with contempt

And John says when you feel you're superior to your brothers or sisters

It doesn't make any difference what knowledge you have

Or what gifts you have been given - you are living in the dark

When you feel superior to others in the body you are sinning

What John is telling us is important

When you believe you are superior to others you are not walking in love

When you do not walk in love you are walking alone and not with God

Regardless of how pious you act what gifts you have been given

Or what ministry you have

Without love you are serving alone accomplishing nothing

Paul writes – If I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. And 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. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me - nothing.

The bottom line is this – If you do not have sacrificial love

Love that denies self and places others ahead of you

Everything you do for God will be burned up as wood hay and stubble

You see God knows you are really serving Him in pride

Gaining glory for yourself

This is the message – God is light – In Him there is no darkness – If we say we have fellowship with Him and don't love others we lie

If we are not waling in the light – we don't have fellowship with God

If we walk in love as Jesus walked in love

We will not cause other believers to sin

And we will consider the interests of other Christians ahead of our own

It is when we walk in love that we can know we have fellowship with God and with one another

That is the simple message of love

Bryan Leach wrote this

We are God's people, the chosen of the Lord

Born of His Spirit, established by His Word

Our cornerstone is Christ alone, and strong in Him we stand

O let us live transparently, and walk heart to heart and hand in hand

We are God's loved ones, the bride of Christ, our Lord

For we have known it, the love of God outpoured

Now let us learn how to return the gift of love once given

O let us share with joy and care, and live with a zeal that pleases heaven

It has been said that God is more concerned with how much of the Bible you live, than in how much of the Bible you know

In these last two weeks John has given us two tests of living the Bible

The test of increasing righteousness and the test of sacrificial love

How'd you score