

1 John 2:7-14

“The Old True That’s New”

Solomon said, “*That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun.*” Eccl 1:9 Perhaps you’ve heard it like this, “If it’s true it’s not new and if it’s new it’s not true.” Be it in the practical or in principle there’s just nothing that we’re going to do that hasn’t been done and nothing we’re going to say that hasn’t been said.

We’ve spoken about the danger of fresh, or new revelation; insight or understanding that arises that has no bearing in the word of God. Yet Jesus said, “*Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.*” Matt 13:52 So what’s the deal? How do these dots connect or come together? Can we receive something new or not? Well, the answer is “Yes,” and “No”; when it comes to biblical truth, biblical precepts and biblical practices there will never be anything new in the sense that it’s “extra-biblical” a principle or a practice that’s not found *in* the scripture nor supported *by* the scripture. However there may be times when God will shine fresh light on an old truth that’s been tucked away in there and lying perhaps dormant or at least overlooked or taken for granted in our lives. He may want to *amplify* our understanding and application of something that He’s been seeking to communicate to us from the very beginning. He may want to *restore* in a fresh way something that’s been neglected in your life or my life for a long time.

Every now and then I’ll catch a program on TV where someone takes an old rusty, worn out vehicle that they picked up for a few hundred bucks, restores it and sells it for 60-80 grand at an auction. They’ve taken something old, given it some much needed attention and suddenly it’s fresh and new again. God will do that in our lives, He’ll take old, neglected, rusty truths that we’ve let sit out in the field somewhere overgrown with weeds and He’ll tear it down, clean it up, put it back together in a way that makes it fresh and new. Old truth, fresh perspective, fresh priority, fresh focus, time and attention given to it; taking that which may’ve been previously rusting away somewhere out there in our lives and restoring its value, making it an even greater attribute, quality or characteristic in us than it’s ever been before. A fresh focus on self control, purity, integrity, honesty, kindness or compassion, a renewed passion for holiness, gentleness or any # of things that He may want to rebuild or draw attention to in us.

It’s with that understanding that we approach 1st John Ch 2 Vs 7 where we read.

Vs7-8

You see when we 1st read that we might be tempted to sorta scratch our heads and simply resolve the matter like this; “What in the *world* are you talking about! ‘It’s not new, it’s old, it’s new, it’s in you...’ John would you quit speaking in riddles and just tell us what you’re trying to say?” He’s referencing a certain commandment yet he doesn’t tell us which one (at least initially), he tells us that it’s been around from the beginning yet it’s new, it’s true, and it’s in you... You read that and you just go, “wow, I’m not too good and deciphering code just give it to me straight.”

But if we begin to approach our passage witheven just a little bit more of a careful approach it’s not too difficult to discern (concerning the context) what John is talking about here.

He says that the fact of the matter is that what He’s seeking to communicate to us isn’t new. As a matter of fact he says that it’s old, so old in fact that we’ve had it from the beginning. “The beginning of what?” Perhaps you recall that when we began this epistle we spent a little time discussing what’s written there in Vs 1 where it says, “That which was from *the beginning*.” I told you then that though there are 3 beginnings referenced in scripture the beginning that I believe was in view was the beginning of the gospel message, from point whereby Christ came to this earth as a babe there in Bethlehem, grew (as the sinless Son of God) to be a Man, suffered and died upon the cross that by believing upon Him we might have life in His name. In the light of that context John tells us here that even so the commandment that he’s seeking to bring some fresh focus upon is nothing new. As long as there have been followers of Christ the commandment has been of paramount importance. It’s nothing new to the Christian experience. It’s the word that you’ve heard from the very beginning of your love relationship with Jesus.

Earlier on in Vs 3 John spoke of *knowing* Christ as displayed in obedience to the commands *of* Christ. What command? Quite frankly every command however the context compels us to consider one command in particular, “What’s that?” Listen, it’s something fundamental to the Christian faith, it’s nothing new, it’s foundational, it’s elementary, it’s something so basic yet so essential that if we don’t get this one right there’s no point in seeking to advance in any other way spiritually, it’s square 1, and until we get a grip on it we don’t get to go to square 2. Ok, let’s get to it shall we, what is this commandment that’s old on the one hand, yet new on the other, that’s been withus from the beginning yet needs to be integral *to* us and a reality *in* us or else there’s no point in moving forward?

It was the very night of our Lord's betrayal and there He was in the upper room with His disciples, He had shared with them the meal, risen from the table and washed their feet; He'd spoken to them of the example that He'd given to them, He had identified and dismissed His betrayer; and with these words, "What you do, do quickly" Judas went out immediately. And it was night. with that let's leave 1st John, turn back to the gospel of John and find our focal point in Ch 13 beginning in Vs 31. John 13

Vs 31-35

You say, "That's it? Love one another?" That's it, it's nothing new, the command to love one another has been around since the beginning, even from the origins of God's relationship with man in teaching man how to interact with one another. Lev 19:18, "*You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.*" The command to love one another is millenniums old, in what sense then is this a new commandment that Jesus gives? In the sense of its qualifying context, did you see it there?

Vs 34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; *as I have loved you*, that you also love one another." Jesus qualifies His command with context, the kind of love that He expects you and I to show one another is the same kind of love that He has shown to us, we're to love one another with the same love with which He has loved us. Well now this takes it to a whole new level doesn't it? Because how is it that Jesus loves us?

He loves us *perfectly, completely, unconditionally, and sacrificially*, where was His love demonstrated most efficiently? At the cross; the command itself isn't new, the *display* of love was something *radically different*, it was taken to new heights previously not even considered.

The cross shows us that the love of Christ is *wide enough* to include all of mankind, that it's *long enough* to last throughout eternity, that it's *deep enough* to reach the most guilty of sinners, that it's *high enough* to seat us in the heavenly places; and this might be overstating the obvious but with that I would include that it's *strong enough* to forgive *any* sin, *any* wrong doing against itself, *any* violation or whatever it might be that's caused a *separation* between itself and another party. Prior to the cross the world had never really seen that kind of love and it's that kind of love that we're to imitate... that's the measure of love that Jesus wants to develop in you, and in me. It was true of Him, and it's His desire that it be true in you...

Vs 8, "...because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining." What that means is that the incarnation of Christ brought light into the world. Understanding, revelation and illumination concerning the heart of God, the plan of God, the way to have a meaningful and intimate relationship *with* God, how it is that we're saved from the penalty of death *by* God. Jesus said, "*I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.*" John 8:12 and The darkness of this world will not remain, it will not overcome the light but it will be overcome *by* the light because heaven and earth will pass away but God's word will never pass away, the light cannot be extinguished...

Now; Jesus said that we were to love one another as He has loved us. He even went as far as to say that the way people who didn't *know* Him would know that we belong *to* Him would be by the love that we display toward one another. John will take it one step farther a little later on in his epistle by saying that it's the way that we know *we know* that we belong to Him as well, by our love for other Christians. That's the measure that God places before us in order to verify to us where we're at.

There's a # of things that the Holy Spirit would have us to consider in this letter that helps us to verify our position in Christ. We've seen the test of morality in Ch 1. If you say that you walk in the light but live life in the dark, that is, in a worldly manner you're lying. Perhaps to yourself if not intentionally to others but if you think you're ok with Christ while leading a worldly, immoral kind of life, you've deceived yourself and you need a wake-up call. God says that we're not to steal, if you habitually steal, you don't know God. God says that we're to honor Him in our daily conduct, the things we do and say. If it's the habit of your life to *not* honor God, than you simply don't know God. Later on we'll see a faith test, having a proper understanding and perspective of who Jesus is. Here's another one sorta thrown in at no extra charge, we might as well call it out in the obvious; the love test.

Because it's very easy for me to *share* my love for God, and talk to you of my great and grand, and overwhelming love for God. But you can't see that can you? I might be deceiving you, I might be deceived myself, but what you *can see* is my love for others, fellow believers in the body of Christ. John says that the test isn't in *saying* it, it's in *showing it*, my love for God is validated in how I treat other believers in the body of Christ.

Can I just say that I think that we do well to apply this not only to generalities in the church, but also to specifics regarding my marriage and my family. Think about your brother in the Lord who is your husband, your sister in Christ who is your wife, is the love of God displayed through you to her, to him? It will never cease to amaze me how our marriages can consistently struggle even in the body of Christ. Oh, I know that we're still sinners and withsinners come struggles, but if there's anywhere that the love of Christ should be on display the most it's generally where it's on display the least and that is in our homes... Look at Vs 9

Vs9-11

Let me make this real simple for you; light = love, darkness = hate. You're either in fellowship with God, therefore you're walking in the light and in love, or you're out of fellowship with God, in the dark and in the absence of love hatred has filled your heart. Because it can be subtle and take on varying shades and degrees, but in the absence of love is only hate, where there isn't light there's dark, if you're not *for* Christ, you're *against* Him. You see Jesus doesn't allow for ambiguity, He draws lines very clearly for you and me.

Don't think that just because you're a Christian that the capacity to hate has been removed from you, it hasn't. Or else there would be no reason for John to even write these things. Why else would King David have Uriah murdered (murder is the final expression of hate)? But you see harboring hatred in my heart testifies against me that rather than walking intimately with the Lord I've fallen out of fellowship with God because if I was where I ought to be with Christ I would *love* my brother. Now that doesn't mean that some people won't get on my nerves, or certain things happening in people's lives that I don't agree with but nonetheless I don't *hate* them. I simply don't agree with them.

Sometimes it we think it would be easy to follow Jesus if it just weren't for all the Christians . So many of us have scars that have been inflicted upon us by other Christians, that doesn't alleviate the command.

However let's not confuse ourselves as to what love is, it's not laying down and getting trampled over regardless of what they do or say so as not to offend or upset them. Paul said that part of growing up as a believer is learning to speak the truth *in love* (Eph 4:15). The proverbs tell us, "*Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*" Prov 27:6 If you have a friend in your life who will lovingly tell you the truth about a *problem* in your life, than thank God for that person.

Seek the Lord that you might learn what it means to “walk in love.” If you love your brother you abide in the light, there’s no cause for stumbling in you. Hatred will serve as a stumbling block in your life that will lead to disastrous spiritual falls...notice Vs 11 (read).

One commentary I was reading said this, “A Christian who harbors hatred for a fellow Christian has lost all real sense of direction. Like a man wandering aimlessly in the dark, he faces potentially grave dangers. ¹” I read that and I thought, “Wow.” I can’t tell you how many people have sat down in my office harboring bitterness and/or hatred for someone, maybe it was their spouse, maybe it was someone who wasn’t even related to them, just another believer whom they felt had in someone violated them.

and They sit there so confused, so seemingly without direction wandering what to do and which way to go. Because hatred is so blinding, it puts you in the dark, you’re blind to any value, or any good that might exist in someone because you simply don’t want to see it. They wonder, “What should I do?” Let me tell you what *not* to do, you don’t do what you *feel* like doing because you feel like giving vent to your hatred or bitterness; repent of that and do what God’s word tells you to do regardless of how you *feel* about the situation and trust that God will make *right* your heart as you obey His word *from* the heart. You see when it comes to obedience to the word it’s important that we realize that our obedience *must be* from the heart. Not out of legal steps, “Ok I’ll do this, and I’ll do that, any other hoops you’d like me to mindlessly jump through?” No, God wants your heart; if all He wanted was obedience the Pharisees would’ve been in great shape. He wants your obedience *from the heart*. Remember these Vs? Rom 6:17-18, “*But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*” What resulted in their being set free? Their obedience *from the heart*.

You guys I can dot all my “i’s” and cross all my “t’s” both morally and doctrinally but if I’m not majoring on love specifically it’s all for nothing. Remember what Paul said in that popular passage 1st Cor 13, let’s look at it together. 1 Cor 13 Vs 1-8a

Here’s the point; there’s no eternal profit in any good or upright thing that I do if the love of God isn’t central to it. Here’s something else to bear in mind, hatred isn’t always aggressive, sometimes it’s passive, expressed in indifference and lack of care or concern, love will demonstrate itself actively for another.

¹ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., and Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (2:889-890). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

As long as we're on the subject let me say this as well; there are times when people will say something to the effect of, "This is how I feel and I just need God to change my heart." You know how that translates in reality? "I'm not ready to die to self, put aside my rights, my way, the way I see it, I deserve to feel this way...but I'll pray for God to change my heart." It's not going to happen, why? Because repentance is a change of *mind*, and that my friends is on you; it's a change of direction. Maybe you've heard it like this before, "If you change your mind God will change your heart, but *until* you change your mind God *will not* change your heart."

Think about this; Jesus focused on the dirt that was on His disciples feet for one reason; because He was prepared to wash them. Don't focus on the dirt that may be on someone else's feet unless you're prepared to be instrumental in washing them...

Ok, John seems to switch gears here for a minute so let's read these last few Vs here and we'll spend a minute thinking through them before we close.

Vs12-14

Now let's not think of these people whom John addresses as categorized by age "little children, Father's young men." But rather let's realize that he's speaking to varying degrees and stages of spiritual maturity and growth.

We all start out in this 1st stage don't we? Little children; and it's enough for us to be aware of the fact that our sins are forgiven, sent away, never to be recalled or remembered again. The word "forgiven" is in the perfect tense which speaks of a past action with present ongoing results.

Our sin was put away at the cross, it was *finished* there at that moment; that's what Jesus said, "It is finished." and Our forgiveness stands forever realized in Christ. Jesus did that for you, He did that for me, He became the means of our forgiveness. Why? Why would He do that, was it because we were such a catch that He just couldn't live without us? No, the reasons for our redemption don't lie in us and our goodness (we're not good), they lie in Him and His goodness, He did it for *His name's sake*, for the glory of His name. It's ok, even appropriate for us to stand amazed at His forgiveness. It's not man's achievement, it's God's gift.

Next he mentions the spiritual fathers, these guys, these gals in the faith of both a long and deep spiritual standing; these great “oak trees” in the Lord whose roots go deep and their upward growth correlates. Folks that have just walked *with* and been used *by* the Lord for decades; they have the kind of walk with God that doesn’t come overnight. We all want to be overnight super saints. But it doesn’t work that way; these are the people whom you just like to sit in their presence and glean from their years of walking with the Lord. They have an experiential knowledge of God, a long abiding relationship with Jesus.

Then he brings up the young men. They’re not children, but they’re not fathers, they’re front-line fighting the good fight, waging wise warfare kinda guys and gals. They’re warring against the wicked one; and that’s the way it should be, we don’t send little children out to war, we don’t send the elderly, the greatest effort, the greatest cost, and the greatest strength is expected of the young men.

By the way this word translated, “wicked one” is one of 2 Greek words that carries the idea of wickedness. One (*kakos*) is evil in the abstract, the other (this word [*poneros*]) speaks of “evil in active opposition to the good.” The “*Kakos*” is content to perish in his own corruption. The “*poneros*” man (from which we get our word “*pernicious*” seeks to drag everyone else down with him into his ultimate destruction. That’s the word we have here as a reference to Satan, he wants to drag everyone else down with him.

The “young men” overcome him, they’re engaged in the battle. Of course a lot of people don’t want to be busy about the war so they stick around in spiritual infancy so they’re not really called upon to join forces; they’re spiritual draft-dodgers and it ought not be. If you’ve been a believer for a year or 2, you should no longer be a spiritual infant, you may not be a spiritual father yet, but you need to be in the fight. God has given you the necessary tools to overcome the wicked one and see people set free from his captivity, don’t refuse God’s desire to use your life for His glory.

Now this next word for little children is different, the previous one speaks of being a dependant, this word speak of immaturity and need for instruction. The idea is that of being overwhelmed with Who your heavenly Father is. Outside of tragic circumstances little children are enamored with their father, he’s the greatest guy in the world, the strongest, smartest, whatever. Their father is their world, so to with us and our heavenly Father, He’s our world, our everything, there’s no one better, who even comes close to comparing.

Vs 14 again to the Fathers, “because you have known Him who was from the beginning.” They’ve got it figured out.

You know those of us who are a little younger in the Lord have a tendency to try and figure out what it takes to be successful here, and how I can be the most effective there. People who have known the Lord for decades take a much simpler approach. It's all about knowing Jesus, there's nothing more, there's nothing greater, that's it.

When Paul was listing various past achievements in the book of Philippians he said that he counted them all as rubbish compared to the surpassing greatness of just *knowing* Jesus. He said, "I put that all aside and count it as nothing, that I might *know Him*." What a powerful resolve that is... To make your life's aim knowing Jesus as deeply and as intimately as you possibly can.

Finally to the young men, the repetitions for emphasis, here we read that not only have they overcome the wicked one, but we're given insight as to the secret of their strength, did you catch that? "The word of God abides in you." God's word is our source of spiritual strength.

Jot it down, Ps 119:9, "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word." and Vs 11, "Your word have I hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You." Does that describe your life? Maybe you're not a spiritual infant, but you know you're not at spiritual father level yet, that puts you right here. What's your part in the war? Where are you at on the wall? Are you putting your strength to some spiritual use?

The secret of your spiritual strength will be found in the word of God abiding in you. Read Eph 6 on your own time Vs 10-18 and discover the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God; and let me just tell you that God's word is not *abiding* in you if your only time in the word is here on Sundays and perhaps on Wednesdays. You've got to nurture yourself consistently, with regularity lest you grow spiritually weak and anemic.

Love one another, and let's fight the good fight together...Amen?

Prayer Points:

God Your word is so rich, so full, so challenging, yet contains the power not only to challenge us, but to change us. That's our heart, that we would be changed, made more like You being an accurate reflection of You. Lord teach us to love one another as You have loved us. Help us to be quick to turn from our sin, to not harbor bitterness and hatred toward our brothers and sisters but that we walk in the light, and walk in love. Increase our strength and help us that we walk not in the efforts of our flesh but in the power of Your Spirit.

I'm so glad that when God receives us in Christ He forgives us, forgiveness is the 1st blessing we receive in Christ. But it's such an incredible thing because it's complete, when you come to Christ you're as clean and forgiven as is Billy Graham or anyone else you might consider to be a "super saint." You're a new creation in Christ, washed clean and made new, born again. If that's your need today, know that Christ dealt with your sin at the cross, and forgiveness is available to you in Him, but only in Him. It's not a reward that's achieved, it's a gift that's given through God's grace. If you need Christ to come into your life and forgive you of your sin than why not come to Him today and let Him give you hope, and a new heart.