

## Week 3 - John 2:7-17

### Love & Hate – Light & Darkness

***“Whoever says, ‘I am in the light,’ while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. Whoever loves a brother or sister abides in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling.”*** ([John 2:9-10](#), NRSVUE)

Here, as elsewhere, John contrasts light and darkness, and love and hatred. He assumes that there cannot be a vacuum in the soul. In verse 2:6, John called for his readers to “walk in the same way as he [Jesus] walked.” John now explains what this walk means.

- **1 John 2:7** – *“Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word that you have heard.”*

#### The Old Commandment

*“You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.”* ([Leviticus 19:18](#))

*“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”* ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#))

John is setting the stage for what he is about to say. He is stating that his words will not be new or revelatory but will just emphasize something they should already know. No one ever loved like Jesus loved.

Paul made a similar statement in his letter to the Thessalonian church.

*“Now concerning love of the brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anyone write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.”* ([1 Thessalonians 4:9](#))

- **1 John 2:8** - *“Yet I am writing you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.”*

#### The New Commandment

*“I [Jesus] give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”* ([John 13:34](#)) (See also [John 15:12](#).)

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.”* ([Luke 10:27](#))

One aspect of this “new” commandment is that Jesus displayed a new love that they had never seen before.

The term of comparison, “**as I have loved you**,” is why it is new. And to obey it would require a new heart.

*“A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you, and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.”* ([Ezekiel 36:26-27](#))

All believers receive this new power when they are born again. What is that power? The Holy Spirit pours out that love in our hearts.

*“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”* ([Romans 5:5](#))

This Spirit lives in us and bears the fruit of love.

*"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)).*

The ultimate proof of a Christian is their delight in keeping the commandments of the Lord. This is a much better indicator than experience, feelings, or sensations that one may be conscious of within.

- **1 John 2:9** - *"Whoever says, 'I am in the light,' while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness."*

In the last words of [1 John 2:8](#), ***"the true light already shining"*** suggests the question, "Who then is in the light?" John explains this and the false claims of knowledge, which are disconnected from the *action* it represents. It is easy to mistake an *intellectual knowledge* for a *spiritual knowledge* of the Truth. Real knowledge involves corresponding action. Indeed, love is not a warm fuzzy "I love you." It is an "action" verb that says, "I am here for you. Whatever you need, let me know. I don't expect you to recompense me."

If you hate your brother, it exposes as false your profession of being in the light. You may think, "Hate is a pretty strong word! While I may not love that difficult person, I wouldn't say that I hate him." But John doesn't let us go there! You either love the other person, which requires sacrificing yourself for that person's highest good, as Jesus did for us on the cross, or you hate him.

Some claim to be enlightened, and yet, apparently, they are arrogant and self-centered. They do not love others in a sacrificial way. They use people to build a following for themselves, rather than build up people to follow Christ. The story of the Pharisee in the temple is a good example of this. ([Luke 18:11](#))

Many profess to know Christ, but they do not practice biblical love in their marriages and towards their children.

*"And whoever does not provide for relatives, and especially for family members, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." ([1 Timothy 5:8](#))*

Conflict has torn apart many evangelical churches because certain powerful members did not get their own way. Rather than acting in love, they viciously attack those who don't agree with them. So John shows that love is inseparable from the light, just as hatred invariably is bound up with darkness.

- **1 John 2:10** – *"Whoever loves a brother or sister abides in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling."*

Unlike his unfortunate counterpart, this loving person can see the pitfalls in their path and may thus avoid them. Additionally, they avoid leaving stumbling blocks for others.

**Stumbling** – (Greek [skandalon](#)) is a noun that originally referred to the piece of wood that kept open a trap for animals. Thus, *skandalon* was literally that movable part of a trap on which the bait was laid, and when touched, it caused the trap to close on its prey. Figuratively, as used most often in Scripture, *skandalon* refers to any important person for whom Christians exercise love in a local church, or else there will always be problems and disunity. When we are falling over each other, instead of lifting each other higher, we will never become a truly happy spiritual family.

- **1 John 2:11** – *"But whoever hates a brother or sister is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness."*

Walking in darkness blinds a person's ethical and spiritual life. A person not walking with God may not admit or even recognize this blindness. The penalty of living in the darkness is not that one does not see, but that one goes blind. The neglected faculties atrophy.

In John's Gospel, Jesus teaches that people, far from abhorring darkness, typically have a strong preference for it.

*"And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil."* ([John 3:19](#))

The prophet Isaiah calls out the people of Israel:

*"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!"* ([Isaiah 5:20](#))

In chapter 3, John identified the results of this walk in darkness.

*"We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brothers and sisters. Whoever does not love abides in death."* ([1 John 3:14](#))

### ➤ 1 John 2:12-14

*"I am writing to you, **little children**, because your sins are 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 people**, because you have conquered the evil one. I write to you, **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 people**, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one."*

John does not mean to give his readers the impression that he thinks they are in darkness or that he doubts the reality of their Christian faith. It is the false teachers whom he regards as spurious, not the loyal members of the church.

John writes to them to consider their character and standing. It is a trumpet call, summoning all the faithful to a recognition of their real and true position before God and with a view of them receiving correctly what his servant is now writing to them. He wants his readers, at whatever stage in the Christian life they are at, to consider what God has done in their lives. He wants them to know that they have authentic faith.

The truest thing about you is what God says in His Word. If you trust in Jesus Christ, God forgives your sins. You come to know Him as Father. He wants you to grow strong through His Word so that you will overcome the evil one.

### ➤ 1 John 2:15 – *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world."*

It is important that we not read into John's command something he did not say. John does not say, "Don't love the world too much," but "not at all." We are not to be conformed to the world ([Romans 12:2](#)).

The first truth is the spiritual dynamic that love of the world will displace love of God. Conversely, the next verse reveals that the love of God will displace the love of the world.

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."* ([Matthew 22:37](#))

It is impossible to follow this commandment and have any affinity toward anything else. This is what James refers to as "double-mindedness" ([James 1:6-8](#)) or what Jesus speaks of as serving two masters ([Matthew 6:24](#)).

- **1 John 2:16** – *“For all that is in the world – the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches – comes not from the Father but from the world.”*

This verse explains why worldliness excludes God’s love or is incompatible with the love of God. All means all without exception. When John says **all**, he excludes no aspect of the world system. Its values and attitudes, even those we do not recognize as evil, stand in opposition to God. Obviously, John is speaking about the anti-god attitudes of the world composed of people. “In the world” is everything that belongs to the sphere of the world that is alienated from God, as qualified or explained by the three succeeding phrases: the flesh, eyes, and riches. John is not thinking so much of materialism (“things”) as he is of the attitudes that lie behind materialism.

The apostle Paul reminds us this battle is one that we will wage every day – it is a battle we cannot win on our own but only as we begin each morning surrendering our will to the sweet, perfect will of the all-powerful Holy Spirit of God! ([Galatians 5:17, 24](#))

*“There is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death.”*  
([Proverbs 14:12](#))

- **1 John 2:17** – *“And the world and the desire for it are passing away, but those who do the will of God abide forever.”*

Why is love of the world a losing bet? The world is passing away and so are its lusts. If you love what is passing away, you will pass away. Consequently, if you love the desires of the world, which are passing away, so too will you!

Conversely, if you do God’s will, you have eternal life. The opposite of loving the world is not only loving God but also doing the will of the Father ([1 John 5:3](#), or Jesus' words in [John 14:15](#)). If you love God, you love His will. Don't say you love God and don't love what He tells you to do.

Just as good deeds will not save you ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)) and good works show faith ([James 2:18](#)), obedience as the general direction of your life does not save you, but it proves that you are saved ([John 14:23](#)).

This is the heart of John’s argument. This final verse of the section contrasts the outcomes of these two loves, two lives, and two orientations toward life. When compared with a life lived in the will of God, the things this life offers are really empty imitations of God’s best. The things of the world seem of great value, but they are worthless when compared to the eternal blessings that come from doing the will of God.

We will address the concept of “the world” in later chapters of John. (e.g., [1 John 3:13](#), [3:17](#), [4:1-5](#))

## 1 John Commentary – Precept Austin

[https://www.preceptaustin.org/1john\\_27-11\\_commentary](https://www.preceptaustin.org/1john_27-11_commentary)

COMPARISON OF THOUGHT AND STYLE IN JOHN'S GOSPEL AND FIRST EPISTLE		
First Epistle of John – Chapter 2		Gospel of John
<a href="#">1 John 2:8</a> ; <a href="#">1 John 3:11</a>	New Commandment	<a href="#">John 13:34</a>
<a href="#">1 John 2:8</a> , <a href="#">2:10</a>	Light in Darkness	<a href="#">John 1:5</a> , <a href="#">1:9</a> ; <a href="#">11:10</a>
<a href="#">1 John 2:13-14</a>	Knowing God	<a href="#">John 17:3</a>