



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 John 2:7-11

"An Old and New Commandment"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We welcome you today to the ministry of the word service in Believers Chapel, this May 18th, 19 hundred and, what is it, 88? And particularly on this Mother's Day, and we wish the best of spiritual blessings and other blessings as well to you who are mothers and to you who hope to be one of these days.

The announcements are found in our calendar of concern. There is only one announcement that we'd like to draw to your special attention and that is the announcement concerning the meetings that will be held here in Believers Chapel this coming Saturday. Dr. John Hannah, who is Professor of Historical Theology and Church History at Dallas Seminary, will be one of the participants, and I will be the other. And we will be dealing with a history and exegetical study of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement at 10:00. There will be two meetings at 10:00 and then again at 11:00. We will have an intermission of an hour and a half, I believe it is, and then we'll have two more meetings in the afternoon. The subjects are found on one of the brochures or one of the sheets announcing it which are here in the chapel. And we hope you will make an effort to come and to think with us about the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement. We are centering attention upon John Wimber and the Vineyard ministry that he has had, and I know that that should be of some interest to a number of you.

I finished my message on Friday for this morning, and then on yesterday I sat listening to tapes, and I listened to eight tapes of Mr. Wimber in a conference that he had been holding, and became a little bit better acquainted with some of the things that he specifically says. I still have eight more tapes to listen to, and some very interesting things emerged from listening to those tapes. There is no question in my mind, but that Mr. Wimber is a Christian man. He certainly is an entertainer, and an excellent communicator, and I enjoyed very much listening to some of the things that he had to say. They are funny. That's the characteristic of us who stand in the pulpit these days, the ideal is to be funny and to be communicative and to be entertaining, and Mr. Wimber certainly is. Many of us who are not as adept could wish to have his adeptness.

There are a few things that I have heard him say that make me question the soundness of some of the theological things that are proceeding out of that movement. One interesting thing that he said was, "Experience alters theology." And he said that in the context of approving of that idea. In fact in another place in the tapes that I have listened to so far, he also talked about that idea. But that specific statement was on one of the later tapes that I listened to. "Experience alters theology."

Now, I have always believed, and I have always been taught that it's the reverse, that theology alters experience, and in fact I've often been exhorted along those lines, particularly in the early years of my Christian life, to be sure that my theology did alter my experience so that it might become more conformable to the word of God. But anyway, I know you'll enjoy Dr. Hannah and his presentation. He is very knowledgeable in this area, spent some special time studying it, and I know we'll all profit from it. I'm looking forward to it myself. We invite you, then, to be here on Saturday morning for those meetings. You will also have an opportunity to ask some questions later on in those meetings.

For today, the Scripture reading 1 John chapter 2, verse 7 through verse 11. I was thinking as I was preparing this message on Friday, and we've been going very slowly to this point through 1 John. I believe this is about the seventh or eighth message, I did not count them up, and we are only in chapter 2, verse 11. And thinking about the chapters of this book in which the apostles lays

such great stress upon love of the brethren, I really wonder what I am going to say after I have given a couple of messages on love of the brethren, what is there else to say after one has exhausted ones first understanding of that great concept? But at any rate we are looking today at 2:7-11, the subject in the message that will follow will be, "An Old and New Commandment."

The apostle begins the 7th verse by writing, "Beloved." The Authorized Version that I have has "Brethren." Some of the manuscripts do have this, probably the more reliable ones have "Beloved," and that's certainly suitable.

"Beloved, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you (I guess one could say apostles sometimes contradict themselves. Look, he says in verse 7, "I write no new commandment unto you, then he says, "A new commandment I write unto you.), which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. (Incidentally, that does not mean there is none occasion of stumbling in him in the sense that there's nothing in him that causes others to stumble. It really is a reference to his own stumbling. "There is none occasion of stumbling in him" he is in the light.) But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

It's a marvelous little expression of faith in those brief five verses and I trust we will pay them good attention as we come to the exposition of them. Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the blessing of life that are ours as believers in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What a marvelous concept, what marvelous truth we find in the word of God concerning the relationship of believers to one another, brothers and sisters in the

Lord, members of the same family. God the Father our father, the Lord Christ our Savior, the Holy Spirit that sanctifies, the triune God for us, who can be against us? And Lord, we thank Thee for the exhortations that are given us in the word of God to regard our fellow believers as our brethren and sisters in the Lord, and to love them as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. We find it so difficult to realize how closely we are related to those who are related to Thee. Enable us to overcome our sin and blindness and failure to recognize the relationship that we have to all member of that one body, the body of Christ.

We thank Thee for this day, this beautiful day that Thou hast given to us, for the material and physical blessings of life. Deliver us Lord from having them as our chief goals in life. Help us to remember that to know Thee, through the word of God, and through the experiences as believing children, the greatest and most significant goal of life. Enable us to have proper priorities.

And we thank Thee for this day. We thank Thee for the privilege of recognizing our physical mothers. We appreciate, Lord, the blessings of life that come from the Christian family. We thank Thee that Thou hast ordained the human family and for all of the blessings that are ours as a result of it. We mourn, Lord, over those who have not had the privilege of a Christian home and of a home in which a father and a mother carried out in large measure their responsibilities and left their blessings with us. We are truly blessed.

We pray for the church of Christ, the whole church, wherever the name of Christ is lifted, even in places where differences of opinions exist regarding more secondary matters. We pray for each member of the body of Christ, bless them richly today. May the word of God go forth in power. May the church be increased, and may the saints be edified.

For the sick, we especially pray, and for those that we have been praying for Sunday after Sunday Lord, we remember them. We pray for healing. We pray for encouragement. We pray for consolation. We pray that Thou wilt minister to them through the ones who minister to them physically, their doctors and physicians. Bless them and give healing, Lord, in accordance with Thy

will. We commit this meeting to Thee today and pray Thy blessing upon it as we sing together, as we listen to the Scriptures, may Christ be glorified. For his name's sake. Amen.

[Message] As I mentioned in the Scripture reading, the subject for today as we study together 1 John 2:7-11 is, "An Old and New Commandment." John is in process of giving us a series of tests so that we as believers may examine ourselves and see if we really are in the faith and the extent to which we are in the faith. But specifically, he's putting out tests so that individuals might realize, or come to realize, their relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. He has given us a moral test in chapter 1, verse 3 through verse 6. He sums it up in the 6th verse, I suppose, when he says, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." In the 2nd chapter, in the opening verses he continues along that line, in the 6th verse there he says, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." The second of his tests has been called a social test and that's the test that's before us here. It has to do with the relationship of professing believers to Christian love. Happily John's examination is not given to the world; an "F" would be the likely grade, certainly by Christian standards, and "F."

The Bible rates love at the pinnacle of virtues. For example, the apostle states, the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, in the last verse of that chapter, "And now abideth these three faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love." So that for the Apostle Paul the love of God is the greatest of the virtues. There are many other texts of the New Testament that suggest that all of the apostles would agree with that. Peter says much the same thing. Others, certainly the Apostle John, reiterate that fact. The world's view of love, however, is confused at best, and evil at worse.

You may have seen in Believers Chapel a number of pamphlets that have been put out on the tables over the past couple of years that come from Dr. Joel Nederhood who is the speaker on the Christian Reformed Hour, which many of you, no doubt, have heard. Mr. Nederhood is an outstanding preacher of the word of God, and he writes very well. And one of the little pamphlets that I have put out on the table, incidentally they come to me because I sent them a gift of \$50.

When he put out a little pamphlet on Calvinism, I was so impressed with the simplicity and the truthfulness of it, and incidentally he wrote it before the Swaggart debacle and it was an answer to Jimmy Swaggart's attack on Calvinism, and so Dr. Nederhood wrote this very simple book. I still have a hundred or two copies of it. I give it out to my friends when I see that they are on shaky Arminian ground [laughter] and are willing to examine their case; but anyway, I sent him that little gift, and I've been getting his material now for two years. He's sent me about \$150 of materials, and they're coming constantly. I saw another one today, and I put them out on the table hoping that you will take them off my hands, because it's piling up.

Well, he had one on love, and in the course of this, not too long ago, he said some rather significant things, I think. Speaking about love, he said that "The world is confused about love, and does not understand love." And then he was thinking particularly about the movie, "Falling in Love" and also of one of our great doctrines in the United States, abortion on demand. He went on to say he had never seen this movie, "Falling in Love," but he had read a lengthy review of it in the *Newsweek Magazine* by Jack Crow, who said it was one of the all time great films. The movie is about Molly Gilmore and Frank Raftis, a couple of New York commuters who fall in love in spite of themselves. The actors, as many of you no doubt know, are Meryl Streep and Robert De Niro. "And," he went on to say, "I am told that they are superb, in their acting. Well, that's believable, because surely Ms. Streep is one of the outstanding actresses of our day. De Niro tells how he was very concerned to portray the tenderness and other things that come with love, not just the grabbing and groping.

"Well, that's laudable I suppose," said Dr. Nederhood, "But the film is seriously flawed. Molly Gilmore and Frank Raftis are already married, and their marriages are good marriages until they see each other on the commuting train and 'fall in love.' So the film" Dr. Nederhood says, "is just another chapter in the ongoing story of the destruction of marriage. The statement it makes is powerful precisely because of the tenderness expressed in this love relationship. Molly and Frank are the kind of people many people want to be: successful, middle class, and so very attractive. What

they do when they fall in love is presented as fine and beautiful, but the fact is, it's very ugly. It's part of the crisis of love these days. Anything that undercuts marriage, undercuts the home and the family, undercuts children, destroys us and makes our life and times more dismal."

"Speaking about children, our society, in fact human society and the history of human society, children are the mistreated group of human beings. History bears that out." Nederhood goes on to talk about abortion on demand, calls it "the second illustration of the confusion regarding love." He says, "I don't know where you are coming from," he is giving this as a radio talk, and obviously he knows that there are many people out there listening to him who might think that abortion is good, "maybe you think it's all right to destroy unborn children. If you do, you probably object to my language. 'Children,' you say, 'we don't destroy children.'"

But he says, "I cannot buy that, and millions of others cannot either. With what we now know goes on in a womb before a child is born, we know that those are children being destroyed, real children. They are the most defenseless and helpless members of the human family, and they are being slaughtered right and left. How many? Oh, pretty close to two million on the North American continent alone. Around the world, the figures are astronomical." He says, "In the Soviet Union, women have an average of ten abortions during their lifetime," and then he uses one of the great adjectives of our day, "it's awesome," he said. "And this too tells us that something is wrong with love. Yes, you can go at this from just about any angle, welfare problems, food and poverty, the family, but what it all boils down to is that human beings don't love children very much, not even their own children, their own flesh and blood."

The apostle says that the greatest of all the virtues is love, the world would surely flunk John the Apostle's test. But I think there are a lot of us who profess [to] belief in Christ who would also fail, people who really think that they are believing people, but when it comes to the social test, they fail it. And we'll see that the apostle has some very strong words about those who fail this test. It's something for all of us to think about, all of us who say, "Yes I'm a believer. I believe that Christ died for my sins. I've had a personal experience with him." Well, John has some tests and his tests

are for professing believers, and this one in this passage, and he'll repeat it later on, is a very potent test. In fact, it's the church's new commandment given by the Lord himself. The consequences of failure, to use that adjective again, are awesome, because if we fail it, we're lost. In fact, John will say, a little later on, if we don't love our brethren, we're murderers.

So we look at the test. In verses 7 and 8 of our passages, he first of all sets forth the old and the new commandment. It's not surprising that commentators, when they look at this, have a little bit of a problem, because John doesn't define his terms always. Now, you must remember, he is writing as an old man. He's been a believing individual for perhaps sixty years at a minimum, and consequently, the things that he takes for granted may be things that we don't take for granted, and therefore we might not understand him. For example, when he talks about the old commandment and the new commandment, he doesn't really define them specifically. So we are left with the problem of exegesis and interpretation. One thing is clear, though, he has talked about walking in the light. He has talked about keeping the commandments, and now he further defines walking in the light and keeping the commandments as love of the brethren, and incidentally, the sisters are included too, love of the brethren.

Now, it's possible to hold different views of what the new commandment is. It's possible, for example, for an exegete, looking carefully at the context, to say, "The new commandment's not defined," but he has said in the 6th verse, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Well, that's new, perhaps that's the new commandment he's talking about—it's possible. As a matter of fact, if you think about it, and reflect upon it, and meditate upon it particularly, you will see that there's very little difference between the new commandment that we "love one another as I have loved you," which Jesus gave to John and the other apostles in the upper room. Because surely there was never anyone who walked in love more than our Lord did, and so to affirm that that's the new commandment, to walk as he walked, is to affirm the same thing essentially that our Lord does when he says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you." But since that obviously was such a striking statement, and has been

considered to be such down through the centuries, I rather agree with the great mass of the students of 1 John who think that the new commandment is the commandment that Jesus gave the apostles in the upper room. So we'll take it that way, but understand that it's possible to take it in several other ways.

But he begins by talking about not writing a new commandment. "Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you," that seems strange, because it's very plain that there is a new commandment that stands out, and in the very next verse he says, "A new commandment I write unto you." But if you will remember John's background, and reflect upon the fact that he grew up in the environment of Hebrew who was taught the Scriptures from the beginning of his life, who had a comprehension of the law of Moses, the comprehension that was somewhat like our Lord's comprehension of course, all the difference in the world in the depth of their comprehension, you'll understand why he says, I'm not writing a new commandment when I write to you about the necessity of loving one another, because the Scriptures are full of that.

In fact, when the Lord Jesus Christ was here in his ministry on the earth, there came to him individuals who asked him the question, "What is the great commandment in the law?" And Jesus replied, "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment, and the second is like unto it, thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." So when we talk about the necessity of love, we're talking about that which is an old teaching. So John could say with, at least I understand him plainly, he's not writing a new commandment when it comes to commanding love. In fact, the Scriptures that they had, as Jesus interpreted them, could be summed up in those two commandments, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul and mind, and thy neighbor as thyself. So John says, "I'm not writing a new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which you had from the beginning."

As a matter of fact, if you think about it for a moment, this commandment was not simply from the time of the writing of the Old Testament. But reflect a little more. What lies back of the

writing of the Old Testament? Well, you might say, taught in a Bible class, the Holy Spirit wrote in inspired fashion, the pages of the Old Testament, but reflect again. From whom does the truth come that is found in the Old Testament? It comes from God. The Scriptures are a revelation of God, not something invented at a point in time, by Moses, but the Scriptures come from the heart of God. And so, when we read in the Old Testament in the Mosaic Law, love the Lord thy God first and foremost and thy neighbor as thyself, we are talking about God's thoughts, God's mind. The Scriptures, the Mosaic Law, are a reflection of him. They come from him. They come from his heart. They come from that which he intends for us as human beings to understand.

So John is right, "I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning," actually before Moses existed, that was in the heart of God, for God is love. This is a reflection of the heart of God. What we are talking about is not something invented, even by God. There is no such thing as invention with God, but nevertheless, this is something that reflects him. So we're talking about that which comes from God himself. The old commandment is the word which you have heard from the beginning, and to hear Moses is just a step along the way; this all existed before Moses. God is unfolding himself; he is unfolding his heart, his mind, his thoughts about reality, human reality, you and those about you. So it is no new commandment; it comes from God. Jesus brought death and immortality to light, but those things existed beforehand. Love existed in the heart of God long before there was ever an angel flying about in the ether or Adam created.

Now, having said that, he says, "Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you," and I think he means true in him, that is the new commandment, the fact of it is true in him in the sense that he is the greatest illustration of it, and in you, you believers. "A new commandment I write unto you," because the darkness is passed and the true light now shineth. We are looking now at a period of time when the ages have unfolded and finally the promised Messiah has come, the Lord Jesus Christ. He has been born, he's carried out his ministry, he's successfully completed it. He has, on the cross of Calvary said, "It is finished," and having said, "It is

finished," their redemption is accomplished, ideally. He has been resurrected; he is now at the right hand of the Father, securing all of the benefits of that for which he died, so that they will all come to pass. He will not be disappointed in anything that he has done.

And finally, and ultimately, all that God had in his heart, long before creation, will become transparent and clear to the believing family of God in the blessedness of the possession of those blessings, and to others as well in their sin and guilt and condemnation and ultimate destiny in separation from God amid everlasting blackness. So a new commandment, "which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past," the cross has come to pass, "and the true light now shines," not fully, that is there is a consummation that lies ahead of us, as will be evident when we read on in this epistle, when he will say, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." So it's a new commandment.

Well, how can it be old and new? Well, I suggest to you nothing unusual, what he has done is enlarge the Mosaic expression of the love of God toward God and toward men, he has deepened it, he has enriched it. He has stated things about it that were not stated in the Old Testament, that is that all the law and the prophets hang on those two commandments from Deuteronomy and Leviticus. Deuteronomy chapter 6 and Leviticus chapter 18, to take those two texts and put them together and say everything hangs upon these things and the law and the prophets, that was new. So it was new in emphasis, it was new in extent in that the love of God is not simply love of Jewish believing people, but is inclusive of Gentiles as well. Orthodox Jewish rabbis, we are told, spoke of the sinner as a person whom God wished to destroy. In fact, one of them is cited as saying, "The Gentiles were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell." What we find in the New Testament is, of course, a tremendously extending viewpoint of this, inclusive of believing Gentiles as well. But preeminently the new commandment is new in the fact that it represents an infinitely self-sacrificial

love. Nothing could be greater than the unfolding of the new commandment which the Lord Jesus has given us.

Listen to what he says in the very next chapter through the Apostle John. "Hereby perceive we love of God," the Authorized Version has properly, the love of God, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Now, that's a startling statement. I suggest to you that that statement is so startling as to suggest that out of the teaching of the whole word of God, John seems to write as though one had never heard of love before. He's saying, "Herein is the love of God revealed," as if others have never had the comprehension of it that one can have when he reflects upon the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, to say that the new commandment is new in nature is certainly true, infinitely self-sacrificial love expressed in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. If anyone reflects upon what he has done for us, he could not help but sense the love of God in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. But there's one other thing he says here. He says it's genuine. The newness is genuine. It, as he says, is true in him and in you. So the process of shining has already become, the darkness is passed and the shining is begun. It will have its consummation in the future.

Now, having said this, speaking about the ancient commandment of love and the new expression of it by our Lord, John applies it to Christian profession, that is to you sitting in the audience. You probably, if you're like I am, you already made the application. You're already saying, "How does this thing apply to me?" Well, you ought to be. And so John says, "He that saith he is in the light," that's you if you make profession of faith in Christ, "He that saith he is in the light," and it's good you know, to say this is I, about whom he is talking. We don't usually say this is I, do we?

But nevertheless that's what is said, "This is I." I have an aversion to, "This is me." I'm sure it's all right, when I pass off the scene, that will be considered perfectly appropriate, but I won't care then. Anyway, "This is I." "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now." Look, he's just said in verse 4, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Verse 6, "He that saith he abideth in him

ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." And now, "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now." That's a startling thing, if we say we are believing Christians, and we are individuals who hate our brethren, or sisters, we are liars or else we're deceived.

Now, this is of course a theological text, if there is anything that is theological, this is it, although, the ethical aspect of it tends to cause us to overlook the fact that it's theology. Now, I'm not going to deny that dead orthodoxy is a real peril in the Christian church. That is, there are professing groups of Christians who hold to credible doctrinal statements, creeds, but they are dead spiritually, almost lifeless except they're breathing and living, but inside the family of God there is a lot of death. I wouldn't deny that.

I have a friend, he's now with the Lord, he's a great man, he used to say that he acknowledged the fact that there were individuals who were dead in their orthodoxy, but nevertheless he was, because there was so much unorthodoxy around, when he went in some congregations and found some dead orthodoxy, he was at least happy they were orthodox. [Laughter] And therefore, he could rejoice in dead orthodoxy, because there was so much unorthodoxy that was around. I think I feel like that, too. I can understand exactly what he was talking about. He went on to say that there were "those who felt that the Christian experience was just coming to a meeting, singing gospel choruses to rock music and electric guitars. Isn't one supposed to clap his hands, stomp his feet, dance in the aisle, and fall prostrate on the floor, slain in the Spirit? What good is theology?" And then he went on to say, "These people deserve an answer to their questions. What good is theology? If they would only keep quiet and listen."

Well, we know the two extremes. There is such a thing as dead orthodoxy, but there also is a lot of confusion and activity going on in churches in which there is no orthodoxy at all, or very little orthodoxy. What we need is something in between, to love the word of God, and to feel it touch one's heart, and to go outside and labor as a servant of the Lord, and to love the brethren as Christ has loved us in his infinite, self-sacrificial way.

I doubt that anyone who reflects upon what Christ has done for him, and understands the depths of his condemnation, the depths of his rebellion against God, the depths of his diffidence toward God, his neglect of spiritual things, the way in which he's rebelled against God down through the years, and then realized, through the touch of the Holy Spirit, that he's a lost sinner and headed for a Christ-less eternity, and then has experienced what it means to be lifted up and placed upon the solid rock and has now the forgiveness of sins. How could you help but be thankful to God for that? And then when you look around and see you're not the only one, we'd be awfully lonely in heaven, after about a million years. There are others in whom the same thing has happened, and they are our brothers and sisters, and in spite of the flaws of our characters, they are our family. We don't like everything that they do, and they don't like everything that we do, but when it comes right down to it, we cannot do anything but love them, and seek under the hand of God to meet their needs, when they have those needs.

That's what John is talking about. He's not telling us, I don't imagine any apostle would ever tell us, we have to like every believer. We're not saying that as a cop out, like you know, I love him but I don't like him, that kind of thing. No, we want to like them too, but we have some flaws in our character that enable, that make them not like us properly, properly, and they have some flaws so far as we see, but they are with us in the family of God, and so we must recognize that fact. That's what John is talking about, and I say that anybody who knows what redemption is, and how he has been lifted up, and brought to eternal life, cannot help but love the brethren. That's what John means. You cannot help but have a soft heart for the brethren.

I guess I saw an illustration of that yesterday as I listened to these eight tapes. Fortunately, I listened to only six and half, because one of them was empty of any content. I don't think he was preaching, but I didn't hear any sounds, and then one of them was just half of there. So I listened to six and a half hours, I guess, of preaching, and I thought, well this man and I disagree on a lot of things, but he's a brother. I must treat him as a brother. I must love him as a brother, asking God to help me love him as a brother.

Well, John concludes with a general principle in verses 10 and 11, he says; by the way, you will notice he will state it positively in verse 10. He'll state it negatively in verse 11, it's very simple, but notice the stark and absolute contrast presented. It's light or darkness. It's keeping the commandments or not keeping the commandments. It's walking as he walked or its not walking as he walked. He says in the 10th verse, "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him," no reason for stumbling if he's walking in the light; if he has the light, no reason for stumbling.

Of course, some of us old people can stumble even in the light, but if we have light, we're doing pretty well. How many elderly people get up from their bed at two or three in the morning, walk up from their bed and trip over something and fall and break a hip? That's very common. One of these days you might come to see me in the hospital with a broken hip. But it's characteristic of old people to do that. The Lord Jesus has a word concerning this very thing in John chapter 12, in verse 35, this is what he says, "Yet a little while is the light with you." He was there. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth." So John's building on that. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." So he says in verse 10, "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." We won't stumble if we walk in the light. And the best testimony to what is light is found right in the pages of the word of God.

But stated negatively now, notice again the stark and absolute contrast, "But he that hateth his brother is in darkness," loving or hating. Now, you know, when you think about the bay about us, in the morning, I don't get up too early in the morning, I confess this, I stay up late at night, one, two o'clock, that's the greatest part of the day, one, two o'clock. The rest of you are sleeping and I'm cogitating at that time, but at six and seven in the morning, you're cogitating, and I'm sleeping. Think of me when you have to get up. I'm sleeping. So I don't know exactly when the sun comes up now, but I know when the sun goes down. You can go out in your back yard now until about 9:00 P.M., so there is a dawn, and there is a twilight. There is no dawn or twilight with John. He doesn't say,

"Now there are some things about our brother that we must like, there are other things that we must love." People ask me that. I left this morning after the 8:30 message that was the first thing that two people asked me. Only three or four people around this table, but they immediately said, "We have some questions." And that was a question, natural question.

One of the commentators said, "John is no casuist, he's a prophet." So he doesn't try to answer all of these little questions that we think up. You can see that for him, it's loving your brother, or its hating your brother. Those are the two alternatives. Why is it so bad to hate our brother? Why not just love him a little bit, or like him a little bit, or like him a lot, but not love him? Well, you know hatred distorts a man's perspective. It perverts his whole being. You have seen, I know, lots of people who hate other people, and they cannot even think straight when that other person comes into their minds. All of their decisions are dominated by the hatred that they have for them. They cannot even think straight. That's characteristic of the world. The world lives in darkness. The world's in hatred, hates God, doesn't express it. "I like God," but they really hate him. And so all of the world's perspectives are perverted, they don't understand love. They don't understand righteousness. They don't understand anything about the Lord God in heaven. What John is saying is that when a man hates, then you can be pretty sure that the hatred will dominate his action. It will mean darkness. It will mean blindness. It will mean stumbling. It will mean ignorance of the way, all of the things that are designed to lead to the Lord God. He is saying simply, our conduct and our character do agree.

You can almost think of human beings as individuals on a sail boat who are sailing with all of the blessings of God, the wind blowing in their sails, but hatred and the evil one at the tiller, because that's the fundamental character of human being outside of Christ. You know, if the Apostle John wanted any illustration of what he was talking about, it lay close to hand. Think of this, John was writing in 95 A.D., more or less, the destruction of Jerusalem had occurred in 70 A.D. Before that, when our Lord was here, the Jewish nation, in the voice of its leaders said, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children. Not this man, but Barabbas." So choosing a robber and a gangster

instead of the promised Messiah, affirming that they wished to have whatever condemnation this crime provoked upon themselves, they have drifted into the destruction of the city, and not one stone left upon another, as Jesus prophesied in the Olivet discourse. So twenty years after, twenty-five years after, John writing, and all of those people who had contact or knowledge of the events of history would have reflected upon that particularly the Jewish believing members of the body of Christ. That is the result of rebellion against God, Jerusalem, the golden, destroyed. What an illustration of the fact that, "he that hateth his brother is in darkness, walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."

Well, to sum it up now, we see now why the world has no understanding of genuine love. Lying in the evil one, being at enmity with God, it opposes, it subverts, it mocks the truth about love; the world, soft on adultery, soft on divorce and other sins, striking at the divinely created fabric of humanity. Their lovelessness is hideously blatant even as they extol their concept of physical love. It's rather striking to look at some of the great men of the last century or so. One of the outstanding thinkers of our day wrote a lengthy article entitled, "The Heartless Lovers of Mankind." He singled out particularly Percy Bysshe Shelley, who in his tract in defense of poetry, first articulated what might be termed he says, "The divine right of intellectuals." "Poets," Shelley wrote, "are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

Here is a man who in his day lived about as desolate a life as it was possible for someone to live, and then there is Karl Marx. Marx was supposedly one of the lovers of mankind, but he didn't know anything at all about the things concerning which he wrote practically. He spent his life in a library, just like Lenin did. He spent his life in a library until finally he came back as installed as dictator, knew nothing about the life of the proletarian. Shelly, near the end of his life wrote, "I'm deeply persuaded that thus enabled," he was talking about deserting his wife and running off with another woman. He had already seduced several and had a number of affairs. "I am deeply persuaded that thus enabled I shall become a more constant friend, a more useful lover of mankind, a more ardent asserter of truth and virtue."

Marx received a letter from his father. "In your heart egoism is predominant." Marx spent his life begging from others, and by cruelty to others became the blueprint of the Soviet State Policy. His wife said, with reference to his ceaseless attempts to dun others for cash, she rebuked him constantly for his financial improvidence and finally she made the classic remark, she said, "What a pity it is that you didn't try to acquire capital rather than writing about it." [Laughter] Freud, the same kind of thing, I don't have time to talk about him. He was the dominant patriarchal male all of his life, which is all right to a certain extent, but there was no love whatsoever for those who were about him. I guess Mr. Schulz has it right on the pennant, which some of you probably have bought or at least you have seen, you have Linus saying, "I love mankind, its people I can't stand." [Laughter] That's the world.

But we also see the outlines of the genuine love with its glorious acts of election, stretching all the way back into the commandments, before the commandments that Moses writes about, the glorious acts of divine election, incarnation, redemptive satisfaction, the indwelling empowering Holy Spirit of God for believers, and all of the privileges and responsibilities that flow from that divine love, beautifully expressed by the Lord Jesus Christ. The promise of our Lord was realized in various ways in the early church, but not completely, it never has been completely realized in our society. "They love before they know each other," said Minucius Felix of the early Christians. And then there is the famous statement of the railing Lucian, an enemy of the faith who said, "Their master makes them believe they're all brothers." And Jesus said the ultimate test of discipleship is love of the brethren. "Hereby we know they know that you are my disciples, not Moses, my disciples, if you have love one for another."

We have lots in Believers Chapel, I think, to do in order to measure up to our Lord's words, but we have the promise of the Holy Spirit. We have the great power of God. May the Lord, speaking to each of us; may the Lord enable us in his grace to truly demonstrate the reality of being in the light, of keeping his commandments, by loving one another.

If you're here today, and you've never believed in Christ, of course you cannot do this, such is impossible. What you need is a knowledge of your own sin, a knowledge of your rebellion against, a knowledge of the cross of Christ and the fact that he died for sinners, and then the impelling motivating force of the Holy Spirit to bring you to the place where you acknowledge this before God in your heart, and receive as a free gift, for you cannot earn it, eternal life. May God help you to come to him. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we have so often, individually, I certainly, failed to live up to his great new commandment, that we love one another as Thou hast infinitely, self sacrificially loved us. Lord, forgive us for our failures. Enable us by Thy grace to keep the commandments, and this one preeminently. For those, Lord, who may not...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]