

## Lecture 25 - 1 John 2:7-29 “WARNINGS”

The background of John as he writes these letters reminds us it was toward the end of the first century. Paul had been dead about 20 years, but he had written warning the Colossian church - “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human traditions and the basic principles of this world rather than Christ.” (2:8) Peter too had warned, “Be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.” (2 Peter 3:17)

But isn't it true that no matter how many times we've been warned about danger, human nature eventually lets down the guard. As the church in John's day grew, many came and brought with them some of those “principles of the world” that Paul spoke about. The particular error that had crept into the church that 1 John addresses is Gnosticism, a heresy that was the most dangerous enemy of the church up to the close of the second century.

Gnosticism was a philosophy of religion rather than single system. Its premise was that spirit is good, matter is evil, and the two can have no enduring relationship with each other. Salvation consisted of escape from the realm of matter into the realm of the spirit. To escape into this heavenly mystery of truth you had to be initiated into the inner secrets of the group. That is why John addresses the issue of the spirit of antichrist that we'll look at a little later.

Remember 1 John is written to Christians to warn them of this heresy. Last week we looked at his reminder that they were already walking in the light by having Jesus as their Savior. There is no darkness in Him . . . nothing hidden. All we have to do after accepting Him as Lord and Savior is to obey His commands and walk as He walked. How do we do that? Three ways:

- In social relationships vs. 7-11
- In separation from the world vs. 12-17
- In sticking to the truth vs. 18-29

The proof that we know God is that we keep His commandments. It is possible to know God intellectually and still live in rebellion against Him. God is known in His Son. To be joined in Jesus and to abide in Him is to be transformed to His likeness. The supreme commandment, then, is to love. Love of the brethren proves a walk in the light. Hatred of the brethren demonstrates darkness.

A Christian who is walking in the light (which simply means he is obeying God) is going to love his brother Christian. Because we know God's love toward us, we show God's love towards others.

But vs. 8 mentions a “new” commandment. In what sense is “love one another” new? In Greek there are two different words for new – one means new in time, other means new in quality. So it was old in time, but new in character. Because of Jesus, it takes on new meaning in emphasis, example and experience.

Love is new in emphasis -- love is the fulfillment of God's law (Romans 13:8-10). It's not a shallow sentimental emotion that Christians try to work up so they can get along with each other. It's a matter of the will rather than an emotion. It's a matter of making up your mind that you will allow God's love to reach others through you and then acting toward them in loving ways. You are not to act “as if you loved them,” but because you love them. This is not hypocrisy – it is obedience to God.

Love is new in example – Jesus illustrated love by the very life He lived. He loved all kinds of people, publican and sinner. He loved his enemies and forgave them on the cross. Jesus brought the light

of life and love into the world, but the kingdoms of Christ and Satan are still in conflict today. John 1:5 “the light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness is not able to put it out.”

Love in new in experience – The Christian life has two relationships: the vertical (Godward) and the horizontal (manward). To be out of fellowship with another Christian is to be out of fellowship with God. As much as it is up to us, we are to be at peace with all men. Christian love is not blind. When true Christian love flows out of our hearts, we have greater understanding and perception of spiritual things. A Christian who loves his brother is a Christian who sees more clearly. Christian love is a practical thing. It treats others as God treats us.

There’s a story of a man who was walking down a dark street one night saw a pinpoint of light coming toward him in a faltering way. He thought perhaps the person carrying the light was ill or drunk; but as he drew nearer he could see a man with a flashlight carrying a white cane.

“Why would a blind man be carrying a light?” the man wondered, and then he decided to ask.

The blind man smiled. “I carry my light, not so I can see, but so that others can see me. I cannot help being blind,” he said, “but I can help being a stumbling block.” The best way to help other Christians not to stumble is to love them. Loves makes us stepping stones; hated (or any of its cousins such as envy or malice) makes us stumbling blocks. I came across a couple of poems that make us think about that.

The first is titled “Are You a Builder?”

I saw them tearing a building down,  
A group of men in a busy town,  
With a hefty blow and a lusty yell,  
They swung with zest  
And a side wall fell.  
Asked of the foreman,  
“Are these men skilled?  
The kind you would hire, if you had to build?”  
He looked at me, and laughed, “No, indeed!  
Unskilled labor is all I need.  
Why they can wreck in a day or two,  
What it has taken builders years to do.”  
And I asked myself, as I went my way,  
Which of these roles am I trying to play?  
Am I a builder with rule and square,  
Measuring and constructing with skill and care?  
Or am I a wrecker who walks to town  
Content with the business of tearing down?

Here’s the second:

Isn’t it strange  
That Princes and Kings  
And clowns that scamper in sawdust rings  
And common people like you and me  
Are builders for eternity?  
Each is given a set of rules,  
A pretimed span

And a bag of tools,  
And each must build  
Ere life is flown  
Either a stumbling block  
Or steppingstone.

So, we walk as Jesus walked in social relationships when we love one another and are steppingstones to help others grow.

Next, we walk as Jesus walked in separation from the world. The right kind of love – brings us spiritual maturity. As children in the faith we come with the simple knowledge that Jesus has led us to the Father, making that bridge of reconciliation by securing forgiveness for our sins by His blood on the cross. As we grown into young men and women of faith there is a vigor and strength that comes from knowing the victory over the evil one that empowers our Christian walk. And the maturity we see in fathers comes to Christians with age and experience in Christ. It's reaffirmed as they grow ripe in grace and rich in faith.

We get to know someone by living with them day after day. Remember in Thornton Wilder's play Our Town that Emily was concerned about married couples running out of things to say to each other? If you're married, you know that it really isn't a problem . . . and if you're a Christian, you know that you never run out of things to talk to God about. I've shared this before but it's worth repeating. It's an observation by Francois Fenelon:

“Tell God all that is in your heart, as one unloads one's heart, it's pleasures and its pains, to a dear friend. Tell Him your troubles, that He may comfort you; tell Him your joys, that He may sober them; tell Him your longings, that He may purify them; tell Him your dislikes, that He may help you to conquer them; talk to Him of your temptations, that He may shield you from them; show Him the wounds of your heart, that He may heal them; lay bare your indifference to good, your depraved tastes for evil, your instability. Tell Him how self-love makes you unjust to others, how vanity tempts you to be insincere, how pride disguises you to yourself and others.

“If you thus pour out all your weaknesses, needs, troubles, there will be no lack of what to say. You will never exhaust the subject. It is continually being renewed. People who have no secrets from each other never want for subject of conversation. They do not weigh their words, for there is nothing to be held back; neither do they seek for something to say. They talk out of the abundance of the heart; without consideration they say just what they think. Blessed are they who attain to such familiar, unreserved intercourse with God.”

Intimacy and sharing come from knowing another person. It is the way to know God. So, the right kind of love brings spiritual maturity. Maturity becomes not only a way to life, but it is also a way of life.

The wrong kind of love, however, is loving the things of the world. The world John talks about is not creation or human beings, but the world system headed by Satan that leaves God out and is actually in opposition to Him. The things we need to hate today are the things in the world that are organized against God. It is a world filled with greed, selfish ambition, fleshly pleasures, deceit, and lying to name a few characteristics. Mark Twain commented, “Man is the only animal with the capacity to blush, and the only one that needs to.” Compromise with the world jokes about sin no longer blushes at wrongdoing.

Paul tells us in Romans that while we are in the flesh, we will struggle with our sin nature but we do not have to give in to it. The Holy Spirit gives us power to withstand temptation whether it is lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes or the pride of life.

How is your love life? Is it growing towards maturity in Christ or has it subtly eroded into compromise with the world? Is there evidence in your life that you are a child of God? I'm not talking about whether you have committed a sin or not, but what did you do after you committed a sin? Did you continue on in sin? Or respond to the Holy Spirit's conviction and repent and confess it? God's child must hate sin. You can be as active as termites in the church, but if you refuse to deal with sin in your life, you have the same effect as termites on the body of Christ. This is not to rob a believer of assurance of salvation, I believe in the security of a believer. But we must also believe in the insecurity of the make-believers. We need to examine ourselves and see what kind of believer we really are. 2 Corinthians 13:5 "Examine yourself to see if you are in the faith."

John says, "some really did not belong to us. For if they had, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us." (vs. 19)

So, again, we walk as Jesus walked in social relationships when we love one another and are steppingstones to help others grow. And we walk as Jesus walked when we separate ourselves from the world and the things in it that are anti-Christ.

Lastly we walk as Jesus walked when we stick to the truth.

Many bought into the worldly Gnostic heresy in John's day. They lied by denying Jesus is the Christ. If you deny the Son you deny the Father. Plain and simple truth. John said, "this is the last hour." It has been the last time for a long time. This is the age when God is calling out a people for his name. We know there are still cults active today that are actively seeking to lead people into false doctrine. They deny the Jesus of the Bible that we know. Antichrists were active then and they are active today. False doctrine leads to false living . . . true doctrine leads to true living.

Teachers are important in our Christian growth and we thank God for them. The true and perfect teacher, however, is the Holy Spirit. He enables you understand truth. To apply your knowledge to life and not just keep it in your head. There needs to come a day when you are able to teach another young believer the fundamentals of the faith. That's why we've had the 1 Peter 3:15 questions. We must prepare ourselves by personal and corporate study and recognize we'll never exhaust the Word of God and "know it all." Do you pray before you begin your lesson? Do you ask the Holy Spirit to teach you?

So, how do we recognize antichrists?  
By their beliefs and behavior.

How do we counteract antichrists?  
By our belief – sticking to the truth, anointed by the Holy Spirit  
By our behavior – doing what is right, loving each other and not the world.

Do that . . . believe and behave and continue to abide in Him and we will not be ashamed when He comes.

Questions?