

ABIDING IN THE LIGHT

We are going to be in I John 2:3-11 talking about abiding in the light, continuing on in I John as we have been doing. I am just going to read one verse to begin with which is verse 10. “He that loves his brother abides in light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. *He that loves his brother abides in light and there is no occasion of stumbling in him.*”

Let’s pray together:

Lord, we come to You. We bring Your Word to You, and we pray that You would break it and bless it and feed us that this would be a Word that dwells in our hearts richly. We pray that the Word would be in us and even things that you have commanded us or shown us that You would so dwell there that we walk in them. Lord, we trust in You, and we fix our eyes continually on You for this time. In Jesus name. Amen.

So we have been in I John focusing on some verses, and because of that we need to see in this book or any book of the Bible that we study, the larger picture constantly or else we get lost in the weeds and miss the whole shape of the forest. So just thinking about what we have talked about before or where we are, there is this foundation of fellowship which is eternal life. So at the beginning of I John 1:1-4 he really reveals to us that Christ Himself is eternal life, the eternal life that appeared, the eternal life that was spoken about, the eternal life that they themselves experienced and were even able to touch, and we ourselves have been brought into this fellowship. We can also say that we have seen and heard of Christ, and we can share our fellowship with others as well. So the fellowship that we have been brought into, and the way this book is laid out is to show us how fellowship works. In other words, we are sharing the eternal life, and we are doing something with it. Of course, that is what fellowship is—you are sharing something in common. For example, there is the fellowship in light, in righteousness, and in love. We are in the area of life so we will just look at this.

It says at the beginning of it: “God is light.” So in the experience of fellowship we call this walking in the light or actually in I John he calls it, “walk in the light.” “If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another” (v.7). There is a fellowship that we have as we walk in the light. It is based on the fact that God is light. So that is the importance there that everything we talk about with fellowship includes eternal life. It includes an experience of eternal life, and so we have split off this whole area of walking in the light into three sections. Last time we looked into being cleansed in the light, and this time we are looking into abiding in the light. But based on that experience of being cleansed in the light, now we are getting into trying not to walk in darkness, but just remaining in the walk of light and how that looks, what that is actually like.

I have called this abiding in the light, and I want to show why. Let’s pull out some of the phrases from these verses that we are going to read in order to see where this comes from. For example: “He that says he abides in him.” So here is this word abiding, and we will see this a few more times. Also, “He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness until now.” Darkness of course is the opposite of light. This is still a section talking about light. So if we say that we are in the light we should walk as He walks: “He that says he abides in him ought, even as he walked, himself also so to walk” (2:6). Here is this aspect of walking as well.

Remember, I said that the overall theme for this big section is walking in the light. This covers all the way to almost the end of chapter 2. So we are in a minor section talking about abiding in the light. But overall it is still on walking, so we will see this concept of walking still coming up. So if you are abiding in Him, you ought also to walk because you are walking in the light just as he walked in the light.

Here is another verse that includes a little bit of walking as well. “He that loves his brother abides in light” (v. 10a). If you love your brother you abide in the light. There is no occasion of stumbling. Stumbling is a kind of ‘walking’ word. If you stand and stumble that is a little more rare. It can happen. If you are at a wedding as one of the groomsmen your knees may buckle. I have seen somebody faint before like that when their knees buckled. But normally, you do not stumble standing up, and you do not stumble sitting on your chair unless you lean back too much, but when you walk you can trip. So the picture with stumbling or if you are going to stumble is when you are actually walking, and you step outside of walking in the light.

“He that hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, (which is the opposite of walking in the light) and knows not where he goes, because the darkness has blinded his eyes” (2:11). All of this is just to enable us to see that we are talking about abiding in the light in this bigger picture of walking in the light. Abiding in the light is actually not standing still necessarily. If I think of abiding, I think of sitting on my couch, maybe thinking of things in my own mind, or I think of laying down, then I am abiding. This is so peaceful and relaxing. But abiding is not just abiding in your lazy chair; it is abiding in the home or even like the Israelites who could dwell in the land. In the land there is farming, there are all kind of things, even our first fighting, but it is dwelling in a place. So our place of dwelling is in Christ, and there is much to do in Christ, there is much to do in the light.

Even though this theme abiding in the light says, “abide in Him” some of the verses we have already shown say, “Abide in Him.” Whatever you are abiding in, whether later in I John it says, “abiding in love or abiding in light” it is always abiding in Christ. So it is not like a separate thing. You are not abiding in light, and later today you are going to abide in Christ, which will be a new experience. If I abide in the light, I am abiding in Christ. It is just a certain emphasis of the fellowship that I am having in Christ or an emphasis of the experience of abiding in Christ is that we walk in the light just as He walked in the light.

That is our theme concept. With that we have to cover another concept which is the relationship between love and commandments. This comes up a lot in these verses that we are going to look at, so we will see that they show up everywhere. It does not mean that just because the word love comes up here a lot that we are talking about love. Actually, I John has the most instances of the word love of any book in the Bible. But there is a section on love that really focuses where it says, “God is love.” We are called to love our brethren, but love comes up everywhere, even if we are talking about faith or hope. Love is kind of embedded in there, and with fellowship it is a little bit messy. It is not like I am fellowshiping now just with light or when we deal with righteousness later. When we keep His commandments, we are actually practicing righteousness. Therefore, they all kind of overlap. But love and commandments have a special relationship. They are everywhere even in these three sections. All three of them have love and commandments, so we are just going to pick out something in the section of righteousness because we are going to be in light.

“And this is His commandment that we believe on the name of his Son (3:23).” Notice the word commandment that we have already. We believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and we love one another even as he has given us commandment. So He has given us commandments to love one another, but this is His commandment to believe. If you think of believing on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, this is really our experience of loving God. If you love the Lord God, you are going to receive His Son. The main, major, broken commandment that you will be judged for at the Great White Judgment throne as an unbeliever is: “What have you done with My Son? Your name is not in the book of life.” So this commandment to believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and as an overflow from that we love one another is the relationship of love and commandment. Love is actually the commandment.

Now in the section on love and fellowship, this commandment we have from Him is that He that loves God loves also his brother. This could remind us that the commandments include loving God and loving our neighbors even as Jesus talked about. This greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with everything, and the second is just like it which is a similar experience. An outflow of that is to love your neighbor as yourself. That was a well-known thing, and here is a kind of picture of that: he that loves God also loves his brother. But this is the commandment which is love. “If you love, you keep His commandments,” which is what this one says.

“Hereby we know that we love the children of God” (1 John 5:2). Here is how you know that you are loving the children of God when we love God and keep His commandment. This is some circular reasoning right here and gets a little confusing. “For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). The love of God is that you keep His commandments. If you love God you keep His commandments. What are His commandments? To love God. So we get lost in this cycle of obeying and responding to His commandments, but what is He actually commanding us to do? It either has something very specifically to do with loving the Lord Himself or in an outflow of that is loving one another. So in these loving commandments we have to squash these things together or at least see the relationship there. You can take out a specific commandment and say, “He has commanded me to do this thing,” but if you take a step back from that commandment, you could see the overall goal of God is that you love Him and love people—we love our neighbors, we love one another. If we can catch that it will help us in our focus on this 1 John passage.

Also these two show up when talking about abiding which is what our topic is for this time. So I am going to use some of Jesus’ instructions on abiding from His perfect abiding chapter in John 15.

“If ye shall keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love” (v. 10a). So here is a relationship with commandments, abiding and love, all put together which is exactly what we are going to find in chapter 2 of 1 John. “As I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love” (v. 10b).

When we mention the word abiding, it actually sounds very mature, and it sounds very much like someday I am going to learn how to abide. I have read some books of mystics of old, and they have these goals, and at the end of their lives they were found abiding. However, with the Lord Jesus He gives us a starting point of abiding which you can do from day one as a believer, and that is to keep His commandments. That is something now. I am very dull and very dumb spiritually, but I know that He has commanded me to do something, and I have the option to

obey it or not. Now I can begin to abide. We can probably realize that I am not abiding if I absolutely disobey His commandments. That is obvious that I am not abiding.

To experience abiding the simple start is to keep His commandments. Again, this is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Here again is that relationship of the commandment itself and loving one another.

“These things I command you, that ye love one another” (John 15:17). So if we see that, then the next thing we want to look at before we get into the verses is this overflow from being cleansed and moving into abiding. Remember that last time we talked about being cleansed, and in that section we covered we were looking at being cleansed. The first thing you notice when you read these verses of chapter 2:3-11 is that it sounds and feels a little bit similar to what you just looked at in chapter 1. For example, comparing these verses, before it would say, “If we say;” then he says, “he that says.” And there were those three times that he was talking about lies. So we are looking at cleansing and he says, “We deceive ourselves.” But here the lying concept comes up again. He is a liar, and the truth is not in him (2:4). And that same phrase comes up here in the abiding section. Here is another case. I will pull out a couple of samples. “If we say ... and walk in darkness” (2:9). He who says but has a whole experience of something that you have said that you are not actually doing, but you are in the darkness until now. To be in the darkness is that picture of: I am abiding in darkness.

The reason I want to show that these things are similar is because there is a direct relationship. If I stop abiding right now, I need to be cleansed because, what just happened? I went to dwell in darkness. It is not: “I am being a good Christian, but I am not yet there for abiding.” If I am walking with the Lord, if I am in fellowship, it is called abiding. I am walking in the light; I am abiding in the light. When I am with the Lord, I am abiding. If I stop abiding I am dwelling in darkness.

We are not talking about the feeling of abiding. Occasionally, with just the right song or the right morning time or the right fellowship, you have that sense of His presence and you feel like you are in Him and He is in you. The whole room is His presence and you are abiding in Christ. It is not necessary that you always feel that you are abiding. You do not always notice the decorations in your home, but they are there when you are there. When we are in Christ we are doing many things. We do not always notice His presence, but you will notice when you are not in His presence. As we get used to doing these things, you get used to being cleansed. You notice when your conscience is uncomfortable, when something is wrong, or something is off. So there is a relationship. Sometimes you do not know that you are not abiding except when you realize you are being convicted of some darkness. Then you know something happened and got you out of the presence of the Lord. Then you confess, you are cleansed and you get back right. So there is this constant regular relationship between being cleansed and abiding, and they are a little bit parallel in their discussion here in I John.

We looked at three sections in the part on cleansing. At the very beginning, even though you are thinking of being cleansed, you are thinking of your issues, such as, I have been hiding, I have been lying, I have been saying that I am walking in the light, but I am actually walking in the darkness. But there was something hidden there which was discovered by the Lord which was that we fellowship when we are cleansed. When we fellowship, we are cleansed, and that is something of a jewel to the Lord, a goal of God that He wants to bring us into. So even at that very start it says, “If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another

and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us.” So the goal is that by being cleansed and walking in the light, we are entering into this fellowship with the Lord and with one another. When we get into this thought of routine or this regular constant habit of confessing our sins, it keeps us clean and actually keeps us abiding.

Lastly, the thing we looked at was this potentially impossible sin to overcome. But the Lord has said, “I write these things to you so you would not sin.” There is a way because we have a Comforter with the Father, we have a Patron with the Father, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One. He is the propitiation for our sins. He is that atoning sacrifice. As we fixed our eyes on Him we saw that we are cleansed to sin no more. It is like when the Lord Jesus said to the woman caught in her sins: “Neither do I condemn you, but go and sin no more.” When we are cleansed, it is not to have this repeating cycle; there is some hope with it. I am in a cleansed spot right now; there is no need to sin, and you stop looking at your history, and you begin to look at the Lord Jesus Himself. So that brings you into this spot.

Now I bring this up because this overflows into where we are right now. That finished with chapter 2:2 and then in verse 3 it is getting into something that we must have as the cleansed foundation. As we look into the walking even as the Lord Jesus walked, looking into keeping His commandments, we have to know that we have been cleansed so that we would not sin. We have to have that discovery in front of us that Christ Himself is there and He is able to overcome.

So on this part of abiding we are going to look at three sections with these verses. And this first section is that we abide and actually walk. While we are resting, it is not just about not sinning. “Okay, I am in Christ, please don’t sin, please don’t sin.” It is not like that. We are not just hoping to not sin. Our whole focus in life as a Christian is not just to merely stop sinning, to just merely overcome some evil or even overcome ourselves; we have some walking to do. We have some commands to keep which are not all negative, such as stop doing that. The commands are, “Do something—love.” There is something to actually walk in, just like the Lord Jesus. He did not sin, but when you look at His life, especially in the Gospels, as you are reading about His life, the thing to notice is that He never sinned; it is never mentioned. However, you notice all the many things He walked in; He was doing things. In the Gospel of John, at the end, it says that He had done so many things that he could not write about them. There are not enough books in the world to write about all that He did. He was walking in the light, and as we abide in Him *He is going to walk through us*. So that is kind of like a foundational, constant must-have to get us into abiding. That is the first section.

That section deals with a new commandment, and it is similar to that whole thing of confessing where there is a routine and a regular abiding experience.

Thirdly, there is something to discover which is what we mentioned before with commandments and love, but it is the positive aspect of loving. It is the actual doing of something that actually keeps you from all of the darkness and brings you into abiding. So when we are doing those commands of love, we are brought into that.

I John 2:3 is that first section, but as we start off again, remember that we just said, “We write these things to you so that you would not sin.” We just saw the Patron with the Father. We just saw that He is the provision for our sins; therefore we have here such a bold statement: “go and sin no more” that has been spoken to our hearts as we have come out of being cleansed, and now he says, “We know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.” On the surface this can be like many of the verses in I John. This can be a confusing verse or a stumbling verse if all

that I am thinking about is: "Am I saved, or am I not saved?" Remember in I John we are dealing with: "Am I in fellowship or am I not in fellowship?" "Hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (v.3). Have you broken a commandment? Does that mean that you have never known the Lord? Does that mean that you are just an unbeliever? It does not mean that. This is similar to what is spoken of in Matthew 7 where Jesus talks about people doing many good things, but at the end of it He says, "Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. I never knew you" (v. 23). It is not that these are unbelievers; they are doing things like casting out demons, they are doing a lot of good things actually, but they were not His commands. They were not Him speaking to them and leading them. They were lawless good things, and He did not know them in those things. This is that type of knowing; it is actually the same word. We know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.

Another thing: do you have assurance of knowing the Lord, assurance of your salvation? I know that I know the Lord because so many years ago when I was this age I believed on the Lord, and I received eternal life. I know the Lord. I know that I know the Lord. The way to know that you know the Lord is the current moment right now. There is some assurance; yes, I have the history of knowing the Lord, but there is also that knowing Him right now, and that is why I am keeping His commandments.

V. 4: "He that says, I know him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." This again is a match-up with v. 2, but it is just the opposite. "He that says I know him..." Before, we said, "We know that we know him if we actually do the job of keeping his commandments." Here is the case where I am saying, "I know the Lord, but I am not keeping His commandments. What is happening is that though I know the Lord, though I am in Christ, I am not abiding in Christ. So I am someone who knows the Lord, but I do not know Him right now in the abiding way. And in that abiding way we experience the truth dwelling in us. Light has shown, commandments have been spoken, and the truth is actually in us.

Now who are we lying to in this case? I think there are a lot of lies that go on. Am I saying that I know Him to other people? Am I saying that I know Him to myself? We saw before that with the verses on cleansing, this is kind of what happens. You lie to others, but then you also lie to yourself. You deceive yourself. You get into this cycle of tons of lies of darkness and the truth has not just landed. But what we have to see here is that keeping the Lord's commandments has everything to do with the current knowing of the Lord. I know the Lord from receiving His love, from receiving His forgiveness, but do you know the Lord when He lives through you? That is a new knowing of Him. It is a wonderful knowing of Him. I am abiding in Him, but now He is abiding in me. To know the Lord when He loves somebody through you is a new knowledge of the Lord. I know what it is like for the Lord to love me. I do know the Lord that way, but when I keep His commandments, I now know the Lord more intimately because His life just flows through me. So this should speak to us and show us that we are not to keep His commandments without Him, without His very life in us or else we will not know Him. And we have this heart in Philippians 3: "I want to know Him." This is my goal, to know Him more. I want to know Him but how am I going to know Him? Sometimes it is in the fellowship of His sufferings. When you are fellowshiping in His sufferings you are loving the Lord and loving your brethren. Sometimes it is in the power of resurrection as you need the resurrection power to keep a commandment. It is a commandment maybe of a discipline, a commandment of something that is very hard for you, but you tap into His resurrection life within you, and then you know Him in the power of His resurrection. This

desire to know Him is experienced as we abide in Him, but abiding in Him is not sitting still; it is keeping His commandments. It is all happening right here.

V. 5: "Whoever keeps his word, in him verily the love of God is perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him."

In I John 1:8 it says, "The truth is not in us." This is as if someone is saying that they have not sinned or they have no sin. In v. 10 it says, "If we say that we have not sinned, his word is not in us." Now we just had the verse before in v. 4. Here we have this picture of the word as well (v. 5). These two go together with his experience of whoever keeps his word. If you think of not keeping His word, maybe God has spoken a word specifically to you, a command, something that is from Him that you are convicted of to do or even not to do, but if you keep that word instead, you will forget about disobeying the commandments. You actually respond to that word and you do it. You do not say that God is a liar by saying that He gave me that command, but I just cannot do it. You said to stop doing this, but I cannot stop. Instead, you look away to Jesus and you actually keep His word by the life of Christ within you. If you do that, the love of God is perfected in you. The reason the love of God is perfected in you is because, (of course the love of God is perfect) but to be perfected is a completion, it means that the love of God has come to us but now the love of God has been completed because it has come out through us. In order to keep His command the love of God flows through us, and now I love the Lord back with the very love that He loved me or I love the brethren, but it is not by my love, it is not by mustering up emotional love for them; it is by allowing the love of God to love them. That love of God is perfected or completed when I keep His Word. I think I am just trying to keep His Word. I do not feel the love of God, but He has commanded me to do something. He has commanded me to talk to someone, and as I trust in the Lord, I look away to the Lord. I do not feel like it, I do not necessarily like the person too much, but He has commanded for some fellowship. He has commanded for a little bit of loving the brethren. You contact them or you talk to them, or you go up to them on a Sunday to say hello, and as you go and do that because you are looking to the Lord for His grace the love of God is completed. He just loved that believer through you. The love of God is perfected. This is how you know that you are abiding in Him. Hereby we know that we are in Him. We know that we are in Him when we love God and keep His commandments. We know we are in Him when we are in this type of experience.

We are in Christ. In I Corinthians 1:30 it says, "Of God you are in Christ" (v. 30). I know that I am in Christ because the Word of God says so. I know that I am in Christ, as we said before, because I had an experience at some point in my life of being born again. It is good to know that you are in Christ because all of our salvation essentials, all of the facts of our salvation are there because we are actually in Christ. Spiritually speaking, God has put us in Christ, but we need also to abide in Him.

I was thinking earlier of some of the neighborhoods that have a neighborhood association, and they have a swimming pool that are just for those in the neighborhood. They have some benefits for those living in the neighborhood. So the people in those neighborhoods have to have a house to have access to the pool or other things. To have access to all the things in that neighborhood you have to have a home there, but some people travel even during the wintertime, and they will be gone for months at a time. Therefore, they are not abiding in their home and they do not get to swim. They do not get to have the experience of the neighborhood benefits. You have your home there, you are definitely going to retire and live there forever, but

you can travel outside of the neighborhood. However, all your pictures, everything is there in that home, but you do not get the benefit of the recreation, or swimming pool.

You do not get the joy of the Lord. "I write these things to you that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:4). If you do not have fellowship, you do not have the joy of the Lord. If you find a sad Christian, one thing that is missing is a little bit of fellowship because the joy of the Lord ends up being our strength. Even though terrible things are going on, we can have the joy of the Lord. But when we are not abiding, when we are not keeping His commandments, we find that we lose that joy. So when the love of God is perfected, we know that we are in Him, just like we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. When we keep His Word, we know that we are in Him. So our assurance is based on fellowship. This is our third level of assurance.

The first level of assurance is that I have had this experience, this real experience; I have seen and heard. Another level of assurance is the Word of God. This is a very strong level of assurance. Some of us do not even know our first experience, but we have past experiences. But the Word of God says, "He that believes has life eternal." I know that I have life eternal. The third assurance which is maybe more practical or useful regularly is that I am fellowshiping with Him right now. I know that I am in Him. I know that my Redeemer lives; I was with Him this morning. I know that He lives. So that is the type of assurance that it is talking about here.

"He that says he abides in him ought, even as he walked, himself also so to walk (2:6). This is what we have been talking about that if we are going to get into this experience of abiding, the very starting spot is to realize that the Lord is the One doing the walking. It is to realize that we need to walk, and then we are going to find out that it is the Lord walking through us. So we ought to walk. If you feel like abiding in Him just means to not sin, you are missing out on abiding because some of the problem is that we are not actually doing, we are not actually loving the brethren or something like that. But if we see that we ought to, now we have again this problem. How do I keep those commandments? How do I love the Lord? How do I love His people? How do I do this abiding? But we have to catch this concept that there is something for us to do, something for us to walk in. So that is this whole first section, and again Christ Jesus Himself is in view. See how He walks, and this is the way we are going to walk. This should bring to our attention again that fellowship is sharing eternal life, and that it is going to be Christ walking through us. He is still walking, but now it is through His greater body, the church. Yes, we are still doing this walking in the light.

This is like when the Lord said, "Be perfect as I am or as the Father is." It is like when the Lord gave all of these standards in the Sermon on the Mount, which are things that He walked in. We could all agree on that, but what the Lord was showing us as He gave us these commands, these are things to do, these are the way of the kingdom, and we also ought to walk in this way. It is not impossible. We read earlier that His commands are not grievous, they are not burdensome because the Lord is walking in us. He is the One doing this.

In this next section we are talking about this old commandment and this new commandment. "Beloved, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment, which you have heard" (1 John 2:7).

Point taken, this is an old commandment, as old as mankind has existed. Even from the very beginning, there was the first command to Adam and Eve. They did not have the Ten Commandments, it is true. They did not have many commandments, but they had one thing to obey. They had one command. If they were to obey that command to not eat of the forbidden

tree, that is their way of loving the Lord their God. That is their way of doing it. Behind the scenes of that command is the Lord loving them, but it is also their response to His great love. He has loved them and given them a garden, a garden of pleasure. And in that garden there are so many trees, more trees of fruit than you can eat in one day. And the tree of life was also in the center. There is so much love expressed in the vegetation to eat, in the trees, and in the lovely animals that did not bite. All of this is the love of God expressed, and in their response to Him there was just one thing: to love the Lord their God. They were not to muster up the feeling, but just not eat of this one tree. There is a command that lets you express your love. This is an old command.

The second part of that commandment is like unto it. Remember Cain and Able, two brothers, and Cain fell into the sin of hating his brother. The command that he seemed to have been experiencing in his conscience, God had even talked to him about it—the sin crouching at the door of his heart. The command he had upon him was “Love your brother; do not hate your brother.” Cain hated his brother and murdered him. He disobeyed the command on his conscience to love his brother. It is an outflow. Remember that Cain disobeyed the command to love the Lord your God in the way he came to worship, but either way we see the love of God in the first command to Adam and Eve. And you really see the opposite of the love of your brethren in the experience of Cain and Abel.

This is an old commandment. Before the Ten Commandments came, this was upon the conscience of men. The knowledge was there as we find in Romans 2 that says even those who have never heard the word or heard the commandments have the commands written in their hearts. Their conscience convicts them and speaks to them about this. This is an old commandment. It is also an old commandment that you have had from the beginning. It is the word which you heard. Actually in chapter 2:24 he said, “As for you let that which ye have heard from the beginning abide in you: if what ye heard from the beginning abides in you, ye shall abide in the Son and the Father.”

We have that which you have heard from the beginning, that word that you have heard from the beginning, that command that you have had from the beginning. Now this may be talking about our specific experience with the Lord. When I was first saved and I received the Word of God of my salvation, packaged up with that is a response back to the Lord. The response is basically always this: in its bare bones it is to love the Lord our God and to love one another. It is always there, and it was right there in the beginning. Let that abide in you. This is the word that I received, eternal life, this which I have had from the beginning. Now it is also the word which we heard, and this phrase should remind us of chapter 1:1: “That which was from the beginning,” that is the Lord Jesus before all things even started or were created, “that which we heard,” and that is talking about the Scriptures which spoke about the Lord Jesus. So whether I heard of the Lord, or a time I heard of the Lord when I was reading the Scriptures, we all have the Scriptures that speak of Him and the commands all throughout in the Old Testament. It is to show us that all throughout the Bible, even in those first five books, we have the commands of God. This is not an old commandment.

I mentioned the Ten Commandments, but when you put on the second layer of the commandments of Moses and you go to Deuteronomy, you see it filtered in with this word love all throughout those many commands. After their journey in the wilderness, as Moses gives the commands again to that second generation who are going to go into the Promised Land, he repeats them, but he shows them that behind the scenes it is all to do with loving the Lord your

God; it is all to do with loving one another. So this was discovered early on by the Israelites, even just those two phrases, and it became a kind of common knowledge, so they asked the Lord Jesus about this: "What is the greatest commandment?" I was just trying to see if he had it down right, and he said the same thing that they thought, the same thing that their fathers of old had been teaching them in their writings, that the commands are basically to love God and to love your neighbor. And that is what the Lord Jesus said. So they said, "You speak right," as if they had to tell the Lord Jesus: "Yeah, You are right this time." Nevertheless, He confirmed it, "Yes, that's it."

Why were there two tablets? You wonder because Moses had to carry them both anyway. God could have just done it all in one tablet because God's handwriting could be as small as He wants. He could have fit everything on whatever size He wanted. However, there are two tablets because the second is like unto it. The common thought even with the Israelites for a long time was that the first tablet included the first four commandments because they all had to do with loving God. The second tablet of the next six starts out with honoring your father and mother. It all has to do with our relationships with one another and ends with don't covet, and so on. That is why there are two of them, but they are Ten Commandments, one package of the law. But there are two which are distinguishable but not separable. That is the Old Commandment which we have heard, and here we have our paradox: "Again I write a new commandment to you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light already shines" (1 John 2:8).

So I write to you an old commandment, and I write to you a new commandment. This is kind of like some verses in Proverbs 26 that say, "Do not answer a fool according to his foolishness or his folly" (v.4). And the next verse is: "Answer a fool according to his folly" (v.5). They are right to each other. It is the same author, so you know there is not a mistake. It is on purpose. It is to catch our attention and show us there is some kind of balance right here.

This commandment is very old, but it is also brand new. Right now it is a new commandment. The Lord Jesus said in John 13: "A new commandment I give to you." But what was it that he actually gave to them? It was to love one another. Is that a new commandment? That is an old commandment which we have had from the very beginning, but when the Lord Jesus gave it, it was a new commandment. How is it new? This is the way that it is new. This is true in Him and in you. This is why it is new. It is new because you can actually do it. It became new when the Lord Jesus gave His life that we could be cleansed and have eternal life to be able to actually keep His commandments.

Now we no longer have commandments to expose our sin; we have commandments that we can actually obey. We have commandments that we can do. It is no longer the commandments to lead us in our need for a Savior. When the Lord gives us commandments, they are to lead us into the experience of abiding and fellowship. His commandments are not burdensome. His commandments are joyful because we actually have the truth of it inside of us. The commandments were true in the Lord Jesus. When He lived, He kept all of the commandments, but they were new also.

Consider the Sermon on the Mount when He gave some of the old commandments again. You have heard that it was said, "You shall not murder." In Him it was new because there was the life to actually do it. And it was not just do the barebones end of the matter such as I am not going to actually stab someone, but to do the behind the scenes. The whole goal of God in giving that commandment is to love the person. So He says, "Even if in your heart you are hating them,

you have broken it because you are not loving them. Even if you are to speak out and curse them in some way, you are missing the whole thing. So in Him it was new. If there is a commandment that says, "Do not commit adultery," which is the old commandment, there is somebody who can keep it. However, the Lord Jesus says, "In Christ there is not even a looking upon a woman to lust after her." There is not even a falling into that temptation in the mind. It is not only that you do not do evil, but there is some love to do instead. So because He is loving the world, it is not something like, "Okay, I am going to stop here and not do the sin." He is actually doing something behind the scenes with it.

So all of the commands and the command to love the Lord God was true in Him. He loved His Father and was obedient even unto death. The command to love the world was true in Him, and He loved the world and gave His life for it. We agree on this. It is not something I need to explain, but if it is true in Him, because of eternal life, because we have the shared life of Christ, it is also true in us. If you can only keep in mind that it is true in Him, it actually really is; it is also absolutely true in us. You can do the commandments by the eternal life within; this is now possible. It is true in you. If you could say it to yourself. Only by faith, only in the realization that it only works when you see it is true in Him. If I could fix my eyes on Jesus for the moment and say, "It is true in You." It is like a response back from Him; as I abide in Him, He abides in me. This is what Jesus said, "Abide in me and I abide in you; I in you." As I see that it is true in Him, when He gives me that commandment, He says, "It is also true in you." When Jesus forgives us, He says, "Go and sin no more." There is a twinkle in His eye that says, "It is also true in you. You have eternal life, you may overcome now. Let's go and do this together." And this joyful abiding experience of keeping His commandments is how we know Him. It is how we experience Him, it is how we fellowship with Him. I love to receive a commandment because I can know Him. His commandments are not burdensome.

There are some who will say, "I do not want to hear anything more from the Lord for me to do. I am overwhelmed; I keep failing at everything." Fix your eyes on the Lord Jesus and He says, "See that it is true in me." Read the Gospels, and in every chapter you say, "Amen; I see it is true in Him; He was doing it." The Lord is bringing that mirror of reflection and saying, "Even as I am, so also are you to be. Even as my life is, I have shared it with you. It is also true in you." And here is what is happening with us, the darkness is actually passing. The true light already shines. Where is this happening right now in this world? It is in you. The darkness is currently passing away. The true light is currently shining inside of you. Every step of obedience to His commands is an experience of His eternal life flowing out from us. We begin this type of experience when we take our first step of walking in the light and we are baptized. The Lord has loved me and I respond back, and I love the Lord my God. I take that stance, I step out and walk in the light. I have exposed to everyone that I have been saved. It is the demand of a good conscience. It is actually a demand of love, and I love the Lord my God. When I come into that experience, the darkness begins to pass, and the true light is already shining. With every step of this abiding we see this happening.

We need to realize this. Let's imagine you have just been cleansed this morning or last night of something, and you have been in a depression, but you have already been cleansed: "Go and sin no more. Write these too that you may not sin." But we see also that if you could look back in retrospect from the Lord's viewpoint, He sees you and even that cleansing washed away the darkness, but at this point, having been cleansed 576 times on that specific sin, the true light is shining more in you than it was before. It is like every day brings the whole world to a closer

experience of the true light shining. The darkness will pass when the Lord returns. This day marks the day closer in time of the true light shining. When the day is coming, He is coming sooner than yesterday. The darkness looks darker, but when the morning star comes, when it is about to get light, it is the darkest at night. Even though it looks like the darkness is growing, actually the darkness is passing. Something is changing; something is changing in us. Something is really happening as you take this new commandment.

So we have to as a regular habit take every commandment as if it is new and not old. This is a new commandment this day because even though last week I heard the commandment, I took it in the old way by myself. Therefore, it is an old commandment when you do it. It is a new commandment when He does it. If we catch that, if we take every commandment as a new commandment, it is true in Him and in you. If you see a commandment and you are overwhelmed because you are under the law, you know that you have an old commandment. Set it down, receive grace, and hear Him with His new commandment. It is true in you. The darkness is passing; you are walking in the light. You are with the Lord. He is able to do this. He will never command something that you cannot yet do. If He has a future command that is beyond your ability, He is going to grow us first. He is going to mature us first and then take these other commands that He is currently giving us to get us there. "Someday I am going to be like this. The Lord has not commanded me to be like that yet. What He has commanded me though, He has given me the grace to do today." It is a new commandment. This is a new day; this is a new week. We just broke bread, all things are cleansed. We have a fresh start. In this new week we only take new commands from the Lord and do them by the newness of the life that is within us. If we have identified with Him in Romans 6: "With Him in the likeness of His death so also we shall be in His resurrection" (v. 5). He died, but when He rose from the dead, we have been given this newness of life for the new commands.

On to the very end parts, if we can understand that every command is a new commandment, and it is all the Lord. Now notice how it is all something positive more so than negative. True the Lord commands you to stop sinning, but with the new commandment let's ask the Lord, "What do You also say with this?" What is His replacement? I do not want to spend that hour not doing the wrong thing; I want to spend the hour with the Lord. So He says, "He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in the darkness until now" (2:9). Then it is going to get into loving the brethren. This next one says, "He that loves his brother abides in light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him" (v. 10). This is the opposite. If we take these two together which is obviously a package, they are parallel. If you say that you are in the light but you hate your brother, you are in the darkness. I just want to bring out this concept that everything we do when we are walking in the light is loving the Lord God and loving our brethren.

Now let's think about those neutral things that we might be doing. Maybe they are specific sins that only affect me. I do not hate you, but I did nothing for you last week. That is something because look at this parallel: "He who loves his brother abides in the light." Loving your brother is an active, positive thing to actually do. It is not that we do not growl at them; it is not just thinking of them wrongly, it is not despising them or hating them with your feelings. It is that you do something positive in loving the brethren. Now the Lord may give us a few brothers and sisters in our lives that we are connected with, but with that he gives us some positive way of fellowship. He gives us some commands. It is not just that the Lord has placed on your heart, "Please stop hating this person." He does do that, but when He does that, as you begin to pray for your

enemies, you pray for those who persecute you, you love your enemies. And as you love your enemies, you also discover that the Lord wants you to love your enemies. He wants you to love your brother, and there might be something to do besides praying for them, but praying for them is the beginning.

To say it another way: if I ignore my brothers and sisters, if I think I am going to have nothing to do with them and only think about me not sinning, I am going to end up sinning a lot. Not only that, I end up indirectly hating my brother. It is indirect, but it is not loving them. It is just like we say, "To not walk in the light, is actually walking in the darkness even though it does not feel so dark sometimes, even though it doesn't feel like I am sinning." But I am lawless in my good deeds; I am helping many people, but the Lord is not with me. I am helping them in darkness, even though it does not always look like darkness. Hating your brother or sister does not always look that way. Sometimes you go to the Lord and ask the Lord, "Search me; is there anything I should be walking in? This is a brand new year that has just started, and the old has passed away. Many of us are looking at the New Year, and sometimes we think, "Lord, what do You want me to be doing this year?" This is like that thought process. But then the Lord will show you ways that He wants you to love your brethren, and sometimes as you look back some of our confession of sin is: "I confess that I have not been praying for anyone but myself all week. I confess if the Lord convicts me that I actually love my brother."

You are in the darkness when you hate your brother so you do not know that you even hate him. When I see somebody, I remember, "Oh, I meant to do this and this and this." I do not know whether you have ever been convicted of really small stuff which no one would say is a sin, but sometimes you may be convicted. For example with me; I see some stuff in my inbox, maybe some brethren that I meant to reply to and the moments when I should reply to them I was just not feeling it. I did not feel it; I do not know if I can do it. When you are convicted of something like this, maybe there is a note, a reminder to call this person, but in the moment you are just not feeling it. That is exactly when you have to look to the Lord and receive it as a new commandment. It is old to you because you are not feeling it. Have you ever started a note or a phone call, and you are not feeling it, but you faith it by the Lord. As you get going His love flows through you. You are surprised, and it ends up that you are edified because you walked in the light.

Also, the other part of this is at the end of this verse: "There is no occasion of stumbling." The best way to not sin is to love some other people. If I have some free time I try not to sin in that time. You begin to feel that whatever temptation is tempting you in your free time to sin, if instead you have something to do, maybe the Lord places in your hand some love for the brethren to do. So we all get busy in our abiding. We get busy loving the brethren. This is our direct expression of love to God. So if you love your brother, there is no occasion of stumbling.

Think of the moment when you are doing an action of love for your brother or sister. As you are doing it, you are getting the Lord's grace, you are walking in the light, and you are abiding in Him. In that moment you are not stumbling, you are not walking in the darkness, you are not sinning. The best time to not sin is when you are actually doing something with the Lord. It is very hard to sin then. It is like you are prone to sin in a certain way. Maybe you see somebody wearing a yellow shirt, and it always reminds you of a certain sin. Suddenly, you are distracted for a moment, but we know the way of being cleansed.

Even if while I am doing some good with the Lord, and this especially happens with spouses, we do not close our mouths more often. You get very relaxed with each other or with friends, roommates, siblings, whoever it is. You are around each other so much, in the middle of loving them, out of your mouth comes something that does not sound quite right, and you just stumble. When those things come out, you quickly apologize and get cleansed; that is different. A major stumbling in the darkness is different from walking in the darkness. That is like a bounce step that you confess right away. Oh, I am sorry; I did not mean it that way because the overflow of the love of the brethren keeps you from stumbling.

“He that hates his brother is in the darkness, and walks in the darkness, and knows not where he goes because the darkness has blinded his eyes” (2:11). I just want to bring up one thing from this part. Probably we could easily get the general concept. Of course, if I am hating my brother everything is dark. You cannot worship God and then hate your brother. That is why you cannot break bread, we cannot take of that cup when we cannot forgive someone. In the Lord Jesus’ prayer for the church He says, “If you do not forgive others of their trespasses, the Father cannot forgive you.” That is just a truth to know. We generally tend to think about hating with the feeling of hate, the hatred of hate. And I think the more common hatred experience that we have is the bitterness that comes. It is a minor form of hating, but it is darkness. And it is more dangerous because it is so minor that somebody has done something wrong to me. If I am a little kid and say, “I hate you; you did this to me,” it is more honest, and maybe more in the light. If I am a grown adult, I am holding on to it. I see them and there is some cut in my heart, and when I see them, I see this sin they did to me. And when I think sometimes about them, I get angry about things in the church, I get upset, and it is some form of bitterness that becomes an accidental hatred of my brethren. It is especially easy to hate the mean brothers and sisters and all of us occasionally are pretty evil to each other accidentally or on purpose. So those are the ones that you are going to end up hating if you have bitterness.

Instead, in being cleansed by the Lord, the overflow of that, in a sense, is to cleanse everybody else in your mind. It is not that you can cleanse anybody, but it is to let the Lord remove the sin that others have done to you from your thoughts. Let Him handle it. It is like when we talked about being cleansed, I fix my eyes on Jesus Christ, the righteous, who is with the Father. He died for them. So knowing that and how I would confess my sins for me to be cleansed, but I can confess the person who sinned against me to the Lord—not for them to be forgiven—keep this clear, but I bring it to the Lord and say, “This person has sinned against me; this is for You to handle.” He is the One who died for sins; I am never going to die for sins. Vengeance belongs to the Lord, never to me. I am His bondservant. He is the only One who can really forgive them, and if I can step into His forgiveness then when they come and apologize, maybe five years later or never, I am ready to give them forgiveness. Maybe they never do, but He has died for them and I can leave it alone and go on, and I can love my brother. That is the way through.

Otherwise, what is happening is that you do not know where you are going. The darkness of bitterness has blinded your eyes. You end up suddenly with your prayers being drier; something is wrong. There is some awkwardness going on, and it is because the greater hatred that creeps in blinds our eyes; there is a little bit of bitterness. Someone has offended us and that happens, but the Lord’s command is a new commandment, and it is to love that person. Though I cannot forgive them, I cannot do anything about it, this is a new commandment now, and I take it from

the Lord. It is not a heavy thing; I take it from the Lord and say, "You want me to love them? I will start praying for them. You want me to love them? I am bringing this sin before you, Lord, and you take it." And you go on and you love them. Maybe you even smile at them and say, Hi and talk to them. But whatever it is, you love your brethren in that way. This is a new commandment. So in this way of abiding in the light we love our brothers; it is positive. We are doing this walking in the light. And when we keep His commandments to love one another, it is the way we abide in the light.

Let's entrust this to the Lord:

Lord, we come to You for this new commandment to be spoken to all our hearts. We hear You speaking to us to love one another, to love You and rather than be overwhelmed by our failures or the impossibility of commandments in the old way, we fix our eyes on You. This thing is true in You, Lord, and we receive it as Your command to us that is true also in us. We worship You and thank You. In Jesus name. Amen.