

# (1 John #11) on Light and Love

by J. Glyn Owen

---

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of love in the Christian life, highlighting the commandment to love as a key aspect of fellowship with God.*

**Duration:** 42:05

**Scripture:** Leviticus 19:18, Deuteronomy 6:5, John 13:34, 1 John 2:7-11

**Topics:** "Truth"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a story of an assassination and the power of forgiveness. The speaker recounts how a man named Parker was caught off guard by an assassin, but his wife, despite her initial shock, tells him to go and forgives him. Their young son, Ted, tearfully expresses that his father would have forgiven the shooter as well because he loved everyone. The speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing the impact of our words and actions on those we claim to love. They highlight the commandment to love one another, which has been present since the beginning and is a sign of discipleship. The speaker concludes by urging Christian people to not only see love as a duty but to truly understand its significance and live it out in their lives.

---

## Transcript

Would you like to turn in the word of God to the first epistle written by John in chapter two and to the passage that begins with verse seven, proceeding actually to verse eleven. One, John, chapter two, verses seven to eleven. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you but an old commandment which he had from the beginning.

The old commandment is the word which he hath heard from the beginning. Again, 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. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth because the darkness hath blinded his eyes. Light and love.

With the passage before us today, the apostle proceeds to expound the second test that we may apply to ourselves and, if needs be, to others who profess to be in fellowship with God who is light and who is love. You remember last Lord's Day we were considering the first of these tests that John applies in this

context, the moral test of keeping the commandments that comes in the preceding verses. He who is in fellowship with God must be rightly attuned to the will of God, and God's will is expressed in his commandments.

So that if I am right with God in spirit and intention, if I am dedicated to God and devoted to God, then I must of necessity be a person who is determined before I know what the command is, who is predisposed to walk in the way of his statutes. But that's not all. And John wants to make the picture complete.

That's not the only test, that's the only necessity, not the only thing that is necessary in a life of fellowship with God. A man who is in fellowship with God does not simply keep his commandments in letter. There is what we may speak of here and what has been spoken of by various commentators as the social test, which is the test of love.

And it is to this that we turn today. Now, it's important to notice right at the outset that John unites two things, that in our minds are very often, too often, disunited and separated. Namely, the concept of light and of love, of holiness and of love.

Far too often we look upon these as antithetical, as opposites. And we split them, we divide them, we drive a wedge between them. And we almost think of holiness as something that can be manifested without love, or love without holiness.

We speak of people that are very kind and very gracious, and almost with the same breath sometimes we speak of folk we don't like them because they're too pious, too holy, apparently. Well now, here with John the two things are brought together. It isn't light or love, it isn't love or light, any more than it is love or the commandments, love or law.

It is both and. We need to walk in the light which is God, and we need to lead and walk in love which is God. We must walk in the light, we must walk in love.

Two main things emerge in the passage that forms our text today, and I want to look at each of them in turn. I want to speak first of all of a commandment and its authority, and then a claim and its validity. A commandment and its authority.

Beloved, says John, I am writing you a new commandment. Sorry, I am writing you no new commandment, that's the first thing he says, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you have heard.

Yet, he says, I am writing you a new commandment, which is true in him and is true in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. A commandment and its authority. Now, we must stay a word, we must stay for a moment and say a word about two or three things in connection with this commandment.

First of all, a word of identification. What is this commandment? What is this commandment that John says these Christians, at any rate, addressed in the first place, they've had it from the very beginning. The beginning of what? What is this commandment? To what is he referring? Well now, some, some commentators, because of the emphasis in the preceding words, the preceding verses, upon the concept of commandments, they say that John is referring to the law.

The law of God, as it has always been enunciated from the Old Testament onwards, and that especially his eye is focused backwards, right to the beginning of things. The law of God. Now, you may be tempted to say, but there was no love in the law.

Well now, you remember that when our Lord Jesus Christ was asked, what is the greatest commandment? You remember how he replied? He took two words, one from Deuteronomy chapter six and one from Leviticus, and he brought them together and he says, it's all this, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy soul and with all thy strength. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. And all that's in the law.

It's amazing how many people don't realize that. But the word of love is taken from the Old Testament, as you may well check up when you have time. But others suggest that, no, even though that is quite true, of course, all that we have said now is true, but God's reference was not here to the law, but to the gospel as it was preached right from the beginning.

In other words, right from the very beginnings of the proclamation of the gospel by the Lord Jesus and by his apostles, there has been an emphasis upon the necessity of love. All the way through. So, in other words, it isn't something new that John is proclaiming.

Most preachers have their hobby horses. Perhaps we ourselves don't know what the hobby horse may be, but people listening to us recognize them from time to time. They come out of the stable.

Well, there might have been those who would charge John with riding a hobby horse. No, no, says John, it's nothing new to me. You've had it from the beginning.

It's nothing novel. From the first moment the gospel was preached or proclaimed, Jesus Christ our Lord and his apostles have had to emphasize the necessity of love. Now, I don't think there is such a difference between these two views as might at first appear, but let me put it to you in a different way.

Linking it with what follows here, rather the reference to the commandments that precede, I believe that our Lord Jesus Christ gives us the key to an understanding of this passage, or we find the key in words of our Lord Jesus, which we read this morning from John chapter 13. In verse 34 he said, A new commandment I give unto you. It's new and yet, he says, it's old.

And it is the commandment that you should love one another as I have loved you. The world can only know that you are mine, he says, insofar as you love one another. John 13 and 34.

A new commandment I give you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also should love one another, and by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have loved one for another. Now, that represents the teaching of the gospel from the very beginning. But more than that, it doesn't simply represent the teaching of the gospel from the beginning, it represents the mind of God from the beginning.

Because it is revealed in the Old Testament. Here then, the Apostle Paul, as well as the Apostle John, say the same thing exactly. Do you remember these words of Paul's? And it's a key to an understanding of this passage here.

Oh, no man anything, says Paul, except to love one another. For he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall

not covet, and any other commandments are summed up in this sentence.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law, Romans 13, verses 8 to 10.

Now, that's exactly what John is saying. Last time, we see the need to keep the commandments. But now, says John, what's the key to all that? Well, it's not just obedience to the thought of the sovereign God, even though that is required of us.

But it is this, it is love. Shown toward God and shown toward his people. And in so loving God and loving men, we shall fulfill all the requirements of the law.

Love is the fulfilling of the law. It doesn't dispense with it. It sees that we do even the minutiae, because we love.

Now, the next question is this. What, then, is the implication of John's statements here, that from the one hand, this law is old, and then it is new? From what we have said already, it will be quite evident what is meant by the fact that it is old. We've made that clear.

It's as old as the book of Leviticus, at any rate. It's older than that, because it was in the mind and purpose of God for eternity. But it was even written into Leviticus.

It was even written into Deuteronomy. So it's as old as Moses. It's as old as the Old Testament.

It's as old as the Gospel. But what did John mean by saying that that same law, same commandment, is also new? If it's old, how can it be new? Well, now, do we not have this kind of thing on many planes? Some of you like poetry, I hope. Haven't you had this experience, reading a piece of poetry for the first time, even for the second, and it doesn't click at all? It's just dead word.

Perhaps well written, and you look at it, and then suddenly you hear someone else read it. Or someone quote from it. And suddenly the whole thing comes to light.

It's a new piece. It's a new poem. Same thing happens with music.

You read the music, and you have it before you, and you say, Well, that's rather prosaic. Nothing to take one's fancy, nothing to excite one in that. And then someone's genius at the organ or with the baton leading a choir or an orchestra or what have you brings the whole thing to light.

And what was old becomes new. It becomes alive. And that's exactly what John has in mind here.

The commandment to love was always there from the beginning, but it never really came alive until Jesus arrived. And it was in his life, and in his teaching, and in his death. In other words, it was in the person of the Son of God, God becoming incarnate, that that old commandment so came to life that it was veritably a new thing altogether.

Oh, we were told to love God with all our hearts and all our minds and all our strength and so forth, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. But what did it really mean? The significance of it, the meaning of it, the thrust of it brought the whole thing into newness of life as we beheld the glory of God in the face of his incomparable Son, Jesus Christ. Now, he made it alive.

He made it meaningful. He made it relevant. Paul speaks of the length and breadth and depth and height, and of knowing the love of Christ which passes knowledge.

You can apply it all in this particular context. We read this morning in John 13 of how he loved those that were his unto the end. The length of love.

He put up with them. Despite all their idiosyncrasies and oddities and sins and unbelief and arrogance, and you can add much else, he put up with them and he loved them unto the very end, even to the point of his own death for them. The length of love.

He loved not only a small group of men, though he did love them to the end, but he did not simply love his disciples who were Jews. He loved a Samaritan woman that had become befouled and begrimed by sin and was wallowing in the gutter of immorality. He loved her.

He loved a demon-possessed man in Gadara who was completely derailed mentally and out of his mind and a nuisance to the whole society. You see, he not only loved a few, he loved beyond the bounds of pith, kin, kind, or any circumscribed group. That's the breadth of his love.

It embraced a whole universe of men. And he brought the commandment alive, Thou shalt love thy neighbor. Who is my neighbor? Is any man in need? Any woman in need? Any kind of need? Any place of need? Any time, day or night? The breadth of his love, it encompassed even his enemies, even those who crucified him.

He loved not only those who were decently clad and respectable in their habits, if we may so speak, but the fallen and the outcasts and the profligates, the totally, miserably unlovely. Such was the depth of his love. He never said, look, I'm not coming down to you.

He always came down to need and suffering and sin, right down to the gutter. The other day we were referring to the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ went to a party with prostitutes. I think we need to be shocked by that, into an understanding of what good news is about.

He did that. He did that. He did it.

And it is all of a piece. He had an accident, but a planned thing. He was numbered with the transgressors, such is the depth of his love and the height of it.

Wherever you are when he finds you, he lifts you up, out of the sinking sand, out of mire, out of the slough of despond, and he lifts you up into the heavenly places in himself. You and I, whatever our past may have been, can sing with John. He has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father.

He lifts us up into the heights of the heavenly glory. Do you see it? The old commandment, love God, love your neighbor, has become suddenly a new thing. It's become alive.

Now I know what it means. I see it in the face of my Savior. I see it in the life of my Lord.

I see it written in blood across the gibbet on Golgotha's brow. This is love. Thus he made the old commandment come to life.

Now, the last word I want to say about the commandment of his authority is this. John says, which thing is true in him, well, we understand that, and in you, and in you. Because the darkness and the tense is

important here.

Because, he says, the darkness is passing away. Not has passed completely. But the darkness in you, and the darkness in which you once walked, is passing away.

It's becoming a thing of the past. And the true light is shining. What's he saying? What he's saying is this.

We see the glory of that love to which we have summoned in our Lord Jesus Christ. It's true in him. It's real in him.

It's genuine in him. But it's also genuine in you. What a word of comfort to the saints.

Some of them might have doubted themselves, but says, John, no, no, he says, it's not there to the same extent, but it's there. I've seen beginnings of it. I've sensed the reality of it, says this apostle of love.

I know it's there. The same love that I felt from him, I have known in you. Not to the same degree, but the same thing.

Oh, blessed is that of God's people, whom I saw that from the lips or from the pen of an apostle this morning. What would he say if he came here into Knox today, and mingled among us? Tell me, be able to say this. What thing is true in him? Yes.

And in you? Because the darkness is passing away. The spell of the night of death is broken. And the light of the glory of God in the face of his Son has shone into our hearts.

And we are a newly born people in him. The commandment, then, with all its authority, comes to us this morning. We have it from the beginning.

This was in the original purpose of God, incorporated into the divine law in the Old Testament. It was enunciated at the beginnings of the gospel. And it has never been withdrawn.

Christian people, you and I are in duty bound. And it should be much more than that. But we are in duty bound to love one another.

And by this shall all men know that you are my disciples, because you have love one for another. See how these Christians love one another, they said in the New Testament times. Would they say it today? Says John, this is a test.

You say you are in fellowship with God and you don't? Then this is it all wrong. Now, you may wriggle, you may argue, you may be very clever at argument, but, says John, your profession is false. For to be in fellowship with God, who is love as well as light, and to be abiding in Christ, who is love as well as light, and to have that same Christ in you, makes it indispensable.

His love as well as his light must still be in us. So then we have here something which is quite unique really. We have it elsewhere in the New Testament, but it is unique.

Namely this. We are commanded to love. Now you see, you can't be commanded to like people.

This is something of the plane of the natural, to like people. You either like people or you don't. Now, I know that we can get rid of all our prejudices and become somewhere near the normal after we do that.

And we may like people that we never liked before when we've got rid of all our prejudices. I know that. But fundamentally, likes and dislikes are more or less on the plane of the natural.

But this is something different. It's not the command to like, but to love. Always to seek the best for people.

Always to want to elevate people rather than ourselves. Always to want to bring blessing to them rather than self. Always to see them before ourselves.

It's not so much a feeling as a force. It's a compulsion within the soul. The love of Christ constrains us.

Now, a word about the claim and its validity. A claim and its validity. Now, in that context, you see, we come to verse nine.

He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness still. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and in it, or in him, there is no cause of stumbling. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Now, the first thing to notice here is the claim that is envisaged. Mark the words. The claim envisaged is reflected in the words, He who says he is in the light.

There's a claim. Somebody's making a claim. Somebody's making a profession.

Somebody is saying, I am walking in the light. In other words, I am walking in fellowship with God who is light. Or, I am walking and I am living in a manner that is determined not by my own whims and fancies, but by God who is light.

Now, this is, the language here is exactly the same as you have it in verses four and six. He who says such and such a thing in verse four, and then he who says such and such a thing in verse six. John is thinking, of course, of the heretics in Ephesus.

He is thinking of those who have severed from the church, as we read of them in 2.19, and were now prosecuting their alien interests, but still pretending to be in fellowship with God. Broken fellowship with the saints, but still pretending to be in fellowship with God. Whereas in verses four and six, John envisages their profession to know God, this is what they said, we know him and we abide in Christ.

Now their profession is, we're still walking in light. We've broken from the church, and we've gone apart, and we have greater light than the church has, we've got greater knowledge, but we're still walking with God, we're living in the light. Now, what is John to say to that? Well, now, what remains for us to consider here is this, the validity of that claim, and there are two things.

You can see it here very clearly, though we can't deal at any great length with either. There are circumstances, says the apostle, when the claim to be in the light is indubitably false. And then, secondly, there are times when the claim to be walking in the light can be proved to be correct and proper.

Let's look at the first. There are circumstances when the claim to be walking in the light is indubitably wrong. It's false, it's not true.

And you have that in verse nine. He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness still. So whatever he or she says about walking in the light, it's all in the realm of the imagination, it's a make-believe.

It's not right, it's not true, it's not real, says God through his apostle. Whatever we say about walking in the light, if we hate our brother, then the thing is simply wrong, it's not true. We may lay claim to great experiences, and great leading, and great guidance, and great this, that, and the other, but, says John, it just does not wash.

It's not true. You cannot be in fellowship with a God who is light unless you also love. Whilst you hate a brother, Christian, you cannot, cannot, cannot be in fellowship with God.

Now, this needs to be stressed, does it not? If any person anywhere says he is in the light, meaning thereby that he is in fellowship with God, that his life and his mode of living and his behavior is determined by the nature of God as light, and he has communion with God in light, and yet he hates his brother, says John, it is not true. Now, there is a very important question that rises here. And the question is this, what is meant by hating one's brother? It's a practical one, but a very important one.

He who says he is in the light and hates his brother, hates his brother. What does that mean? Well now, I must say that this has given me a little bit of a headache, because I find that the commentators don't help you. And it's always the case, they help you on the things that are obvious, but they don't necessarily help you on the things that are difficult.

Don't stop buying good commentaries for all that. They have much to say. But what does this mean? I come to my own conclusion, and it is this.

Quite obviously, it is not a reference to open hate. You see, if I came here this morning and said to you good people, you know, I'm walking in the light which is God. I'm walking with God.

I'm in fellowship with the Holy One. But my, I hate Mr. Sugar down there with all my soul. Now, of all the people to hate, I can't imagine anybody that I hate less.

But you would say to me, well, you're a liar. And you would have every right to say it. Because the thing is open, the thing is obvious.

Now, surely, even I wouldn't be as stupid as to do a thing like that. And I don't believe that these heretics were openly saying, my, we hate those folks that we've left behind. We hate the church at Ephesus.

We really hate those people. They wouldn't say that. It's not an open thing.

It's not an obvious profession. We hate them, and grinding their teeth at them. What is it then? Now, I think we have the key in the context.

And I suggest to you that we have the key in the next verse. And here it is in the reference that we have here to causing to stumble. He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now.

Now, verse ten. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. Now, it is my conclusion.

You take it for what it is worth. That in this context, this is the cardinal sin. This is the hate.

This is the way hate expresses itself. It's in a carelessness of the impact and influence of what we say and what we do upon other people. Now, the word here for causing offense or causing someone to stumble is

a very significant one.

Literally, it means putting a snare on someone's path. Yes, in some parts of the world they catch rabbits in this way, and foxes too. You put a snare around, and other creatures.

You put a snare around. That's exactly the thing here. And what John is saying is this.

Where there is love, that person never behaves in such a way that his action is a snare that will cause somebody else to trip. And I conclude from that that the real hatred in verse 9 is this. It's the kind of carelessness that you find in a Christian saying that he is walking in obedience to God who is light, whilst at the same time he talks, and he acts, and he lives in a manner that he is quite careless of the impact or the influence of his actions and his words upon other people.

Now, let's put it in its context here. These people have separated from the Christians, and they've got their own little group going, and they believe things the Christians don't believe. But they say, oh, all this is something new.

We've got a greater knowledge and a deeper knowledge. We've gone beyond the Christian people. We've gone beyond those old fogies.

We've got something new. And they were drawing people. They were enticing people, the unsteady, the infirm, the uncertain, the young, growing Christians.

They were enticing them, and they were drawing them into a snare. For it was mosticism, incipient. It was heresy in the making.

That's what it means to hate. Now you may say to me, I don't see that that can be classified as hate. Is it as serious as that, to be careless of the influence and effect of my words and my living upon other people? Is it as serious as that? Now, lest anybody has any notion that this is not serious, let me read to you the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 18 and verse 5 says this. Who so shall offend? Now, I'm very sorry, it isn't the same in English, but it's exactly the same word in the Greek. To offend is to set a scandal on.

That's the word. It's to place a trap or a snare on the path of another person. It's exactly the same thing.

Who so shall offend? One of the least of these little ones of mine, which believe on me. It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea. It's in this context in Matthew chapter 18 that Jesus goes on to speak.

Now, he says, if your right hand offends you, pluck it off and cast it away from you. It is better for you to go into heaven maimed than be complete and be cast into hell. What's the cause of it all? It's this.

It's to fail to recognize the influence of our deeds and our words upon those whom we profess to love or to be in fellowship with. The language then is so significant and it is so challenging. Now, God holds us responsible.

A question was asked early in the book of Genesis. Am I my brother's keeper? My friend, you and I are, whether we like it or not. You are, I am my brother's keeper.

If I take a tack in life and I lead others after me or entice them or put a trap on their ways, on their paths, I am responsible before God. What does John say? He says, when I manifest that kind of hatred for a person whom I say with my lips is a brother in Christ, a member of the church, then my claim is obviously false. That leads me to the only other thing that remains to be said.

There are circumstances when the claim to be in the light is unquestionably true, and here it is. Isn't this precious? He who loves his brother abides in the light, abides in the light, and in it there is no cause of stumbling. What is it that I need in order to walk through life in such a manner that I cause no one to stumble? You know, there is only one thing I need, fundamentally.

It is this love of God in my soul. Jesus caused no one to stumble. You know, when you think of it, this is tremendous.

The Lord Jesus Christ never caused anybody to live a worse life. He never led anyone astray. Now, that negative, I suggest to you, is a very significant one.

Of course, we don't stop there. He positively transforms and redeems and sanctifies. But this is wonderful, isn't it? If you and I, when we come to the judgment bar on the last great day, can be able to say, I really never influenced anyone to believe the wrong thing to do the wrong thing.

He never did. And what John is saying here is this, if you and I really have this love of God in our hearts, we shall not cause other people to trip. We shall not lead them astray, by our influence, not by our words.

The emergence of a new American president with his installation this week reminds me of an incident in the life of Abraham Lincoln, the great Abraham Lincoln. You remember, well, should I say in the life, at the termination of his life, he had been assassinated. Mrs. Lincoln was remonstrating with the man who should have been the bodyguard of her husband, her late husband.

His name was Parker. And she was quite cross with him. Where were you? How did you not see the assassin come? He said how he would have been fascinated with something else, and he was looking away, and he really was caught off guard.

But then when she regained composure, she said to him, Parker, go, it's not you I can't forgive, it's the assassin. But their little boy, Ted, was standing nearby. I don't remember how old he was exactly.

But overhearing his mother saying that, Ted said with tears in his eyes, and I quote, If Pa had lived, he said, he would have forgiven the man who shot him. Pa forgave everybody because Pa loved everybody. What a testimony of a child to his father.

Pa would have forgiven everybody because Pa loved everybody. There was no cause of stumbling in him. My dear people, may the Lord cause His love to flow into our hearts this morning, purging us of all the dross of iniquity, of all the stains of evil and of self, and fill us that we may be our brother's keepers, and not only obey the commandments and pass the moral test, but learn to love and pass the social test, that we may not only put up with one another, but much more than that, see ourselves as responsible in the sight of God for what we make of one another and of all around us in our day and age.

And be it all to the eternal praise and glory of Him who is light and love. Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we acknowledge ourselves to be sinners in Thy sight.

We have to say, each of us, for himself or herself, we have turned every one to his own way. All we like sheep have gone astray. Oh, cleanse us and forgive us and renew within us the spirit which is right, that as well as obeying the commandments with all honesty, daring like a Daniel to stand for each command and its significance in the world and in the church, yet we may do so in a manner that we show our responsibility for the ultimate as well as the present well-being of all Thy people.

Oh, Lord, make us love like this for Jesus' sake. Amen.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/4/SID4812.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-glyn-owen/1-john-11-on-light-and-love/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**