

v7 Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. v8 Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. v9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. v10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. v11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

1 John 2:7-11

This is one of those passages of Scripture that should stir the heart of every believer. I wonder how many of us truly know what this passage means, or more significantly, are we actually doing what this passage demands?

Today I want to get you to answer, for yourself, the following question:

DO I LOVE OR HATE MY CLOSEST NEIGHBOUR?

As we consider this question, let us turn to the text and see how the text can help us answer the question honestly.

I FIRSTLY, WE ARE REMINDED THAT THIS COMMAND IS NOT NEW.

v7 Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard.

There is an account of an interaction between Jesus and the teachers of the law found in Mark 12 that reminds us of the significance of the “OLD COMMAND”.

Mark 12:28-34 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" v29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. v30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' v31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." v32 "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. v33 To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." v34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

There are several significant lessons we can learn from this interaction.

- 1. While all the commandments are important, some are more important than others.** Their importance does not only reside in whether they are God's Truth, for they are all God's Truth, their importance exists in the public nature of the Command.
- 2. Jesus affirms that the old commandments are still valid.** Jesus quotes directly from the OT to affirm their significance.
- 3. Jesus establishes that the old commandments DON'T GO FAR ENOUGH.** see v34.

II SECONDLY, WE ARE REMINDED THAT THERE ARE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES IF WE DO NOT KEEP THIS COMMAND.

v9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. v10 v11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.

1. By not loving you show that you “still in the darkness”. DARKNESS is a symbol of evil. The Apostle Paul writes in

Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light

2. By not loving you show that you never actually became a Christian. The Phrase translated “walks around in the darkness” should more accurately be translated as “CONTINUES TO walk around in the darkness”. This action shows they never left their old ways.

3. By not loving you show that you are actually not a Christian and are still under the influence of Satan.

2 Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

4. By not loving you show that you are LOST. Jesus said in

John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

There is a very sad story in Matthew that illustrates this point well:

*Matthew 19:16-30 Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” v17 “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.” v18 “Which ones?” the man inquired. Jesus replied, “‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, v19 honour your father and mother,’ and **‘love your neighbour as yourself.’**” v20 **“All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?”** v21 **Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”** v22 *When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. v23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. v24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”**

Although this story in Matthew and the account of an interaction between Jesus and the teachers of the law found in Mark 12 appear to end in a negative way, THEY BOTH HAVE HOPE AND POINT TO A WAY AHEAD.

In Matthew 19 we read in:

*v25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" v26 **Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."***

In Mark 12 we read in:

*v34 When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "**You are not far from the kingdom of God.**"*

SO, HOW CAN YOU ANSWER THE QUESTION: DO I LOVE OR HATE MY CLOSEST NEIGHBOUR?

III YOU LOVE YOUR CLOSEST NEIGHBOUR WHEN YOU LOVE THEM AS JESUS LOVED THEM.

v8 Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.

I think many of us have fallen into the Old Testament trap of

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF

There are many weaknesses if we only "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF"

1. Many of us don't love ourselves very well.
2. If we only "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF", your capacity to love is limited by your "Love Tank".
3. If we only "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF", you become the "STANDARD".

LISTEN TO WHAT JESUS SAID:

John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. v35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

John 15:9-17 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. v10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. v11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. v12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. v13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. v14 You are my friends if you do what I command. v15 I no longer

call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. v16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. v17 This is my command: Love each other.

LISTEN AGAIN TO WHAT JOHN WRITES:

*v8 Yet I am writing you a new command; **its truth is seen in him** and you, **because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining***

CONCLUSION

**SO, HOW CAN YOU ANSWER THE QUESTION:
DO I LOVE OR HATE MY CLOSEST NEIGHBOUR?**

**YOU ANSWER THE QUESTION WHEN
YOU LOVE YOUR CLOSEST NEIGHBOUR
WHEN YOU LOVE THEM LIKE JESUS
LOVES YOU.**