

Love Within the Community

Key Verse: *“He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.”*
—I John 2:10

Selected Scripture:
I John 2:7-17

THE APOSTLE JOHN WROTE

much concerning the subject of love, and is even spoken of as the disciple whom Jesus loved. John evidently had a great appreciation of this crowning fruit of the Spirit, as well as its vital importance in the life of the Christian. In our lesson, he states, “I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which

ye had from the beginning.”—I John 2:7

This commandment John spoke of was the commandment of love, in particular, love of the brethren. He states that this was not new, but something they had ‘from the beginning.’ We believe the ‘beginning’ spoken of here is the beginning of the preaching of this commandment by Jesus, some sixty years prior to John’s penning of these words. Indeed, it was John who recalled in his gospel the initial giving of this commandment by Jesus. “A new commandment I give unto you. that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”—John 13:34

Under the Law arrangement, God’s people Israel were instructed to have love—love for God, love for their neighbors—but such love was based primarily on receiving something in return. They loved God because if they

did he would bless them. They loved their neighbors because if they did so they would be in good standing with them. There was nothing inherently wrong with this kind of love, but it was not the fullest expression of God's love. God's love was such that it acted, not based on what he might get in return, but based simply on his great desire to show love to his creation, regardless of reciprocity to him. This highest form of love, [Greek, *agape*], is beautifully shown in the familiar words, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."—John 3:16

It is this same kind of love—unselfish, selfless, with 'no strings attached'—that John speaks of in our lesson. The Key Verse likens one who has this kind of love to a person who dwells in the light. Such an individual sees clearly, and will not stumble. The light here symbolizes truth. It also alludes to the presence of God, for as John says in another place, "God is light . . . if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." (I John 1:5,7) John also presents the opposite thought, "He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes."—I John 2:11

Notice in the above verse that the blindness is caused by darkness, and the darkness is caused by hating, or not loving fully—loving less—one's brother. John puts the matter squarely before us in the next chapter, "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."—I John 3:14

Our lesson concludes with John telling us of something we should not love. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." (I John 2:15) It is this old world's order of things we are not to love. The people we love, just as Jesus did, looking forward to the time when they will have the opportunity to attain everlasting life here upon the earth in Christ's coming kingdom. ■