

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

July 25, 2021

"How We Know"

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King's Kids.

NEWS

Church Camp over Labor Day Weekend

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

Visit the website ~ www.myaletheia.com

New Podcast Host: myaletheia.podbean.com Or go to Spotify, and type in myaletheia

Like us on Facebook (aletheiachristianfellowship)

Emails: pastor@myaletheia.com, stacey.sundt@myaletheia.com

The actual activity of rightly relating to God, by rightly relating to one another, by doing three basic things: 1) By not _____. 2) By _____ when we do. 3) By granting _____ to those who ask.

Also forgive those who do not ask, because that's what _____ does, and unforgiveness is never _____.

Rebuke the unrepentant, but in _____ to restore _____ (Luke 17:3&4).

If this is Christianity, how are we doing? How much attention, time and effort do we spend on obeying Christ's _____ to love?

Atheists _____, Agnostics _____,

SBNRers _____, Unchurchers _____.

The church is _____, specifically _____.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

If a person rejects the commands of God, they reject God Himself as God, which means that they love _____, and the present _____ more. (Matthew 6:24, Luke 14:26, 16:13, John 12:25, I John 4:20, contra Philippians 2:3).

I JOHN 2:5&6 ~

A contrast - the liar of verse 4 is juxtaposed by "Whoever keeps (τηρέω [tā-řě-ō] _____) His Word." Those who love their fellow Christian because of God, have had the "Love of God" truly "Perfected" (τελειόω [tě-lā-ō-ō] _____) within them.

That could be objective, or subjective. Here it's plenary. God's love is perfected because He can love through His _____.

Verse 6 "Ought," is ὀφείλω (ō-fā-lō), meaning _____.

I JOHN 2:7-11 ~

This is nothing new, you were _____ these things when you came to Faith.

Verse 8, confuses people... It's a pivot. "On the other hand," is πάλιν (pālīn) _____. It's to contrast. The contrasting point is that what is now _____, is _____ again as it is put into actual practice.

Any person who claims to be a _____ and yet fails to love the church is deceived... Unsaved. Love for one another leads us to avoid being _____ to each other.

If you don't have a growing love for God and the church, are you His?

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

*Welcome
Friends*



John

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

1) By not sinning.

2) By confessing when we do sin.

3) By forgiving to those who repent.



Last week we discussed the actual activity of rightly relating to God, by rightly relating to one another, by doing three basic things: 1) By not sinning. Which is to say, by not giving offence to others. 2) By confessing when we do sin. Which is to say, by humbly apologizing our offence to those we do offend. 3) By appreciating the forgiveness in which we stand enough to self-sacrificingly work to forgive those who trespass against us. Certainly, it is granting forgiveness to those who repent. Which is to say, extending God's forgiveness to those who ask. But it is also forgiving and rebuking those who have not asked.

*Unforgiveness is like drinking poison,
hoping it hurts the other person.*



That last bit is the part I didn't fully develop last week. Forgive those who do not ask just as your Heavenly Father has in Christ. Do it to be like Him and do it because unforgiveness is never good. Unforgiveness is always ugly, always self-indulgent, and always self-destructive. Forgive because unforgiveness keeps you being the victim. Don't allow someone else's trespass to keep you suffering for one moment longer than necessary.

Remember the words of Jesus, recorded in Luke 17:3&4, "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him." Rebuke others. This has the potential for going off the rails in a hurry. The keys to getting it right are 1) first, we're talking about a fellow Christian with whom you have some interaction - "Your brother." 2) Second, this person has sinned against you - you are the injured party. 3) Third, the rebuke is for the purposes of reestablishing right relationship between you - repentance, followed by forgiveness, which results in harmonious fellowship in the church once again. To use a rebuke to satisfy your sense of justice is not even

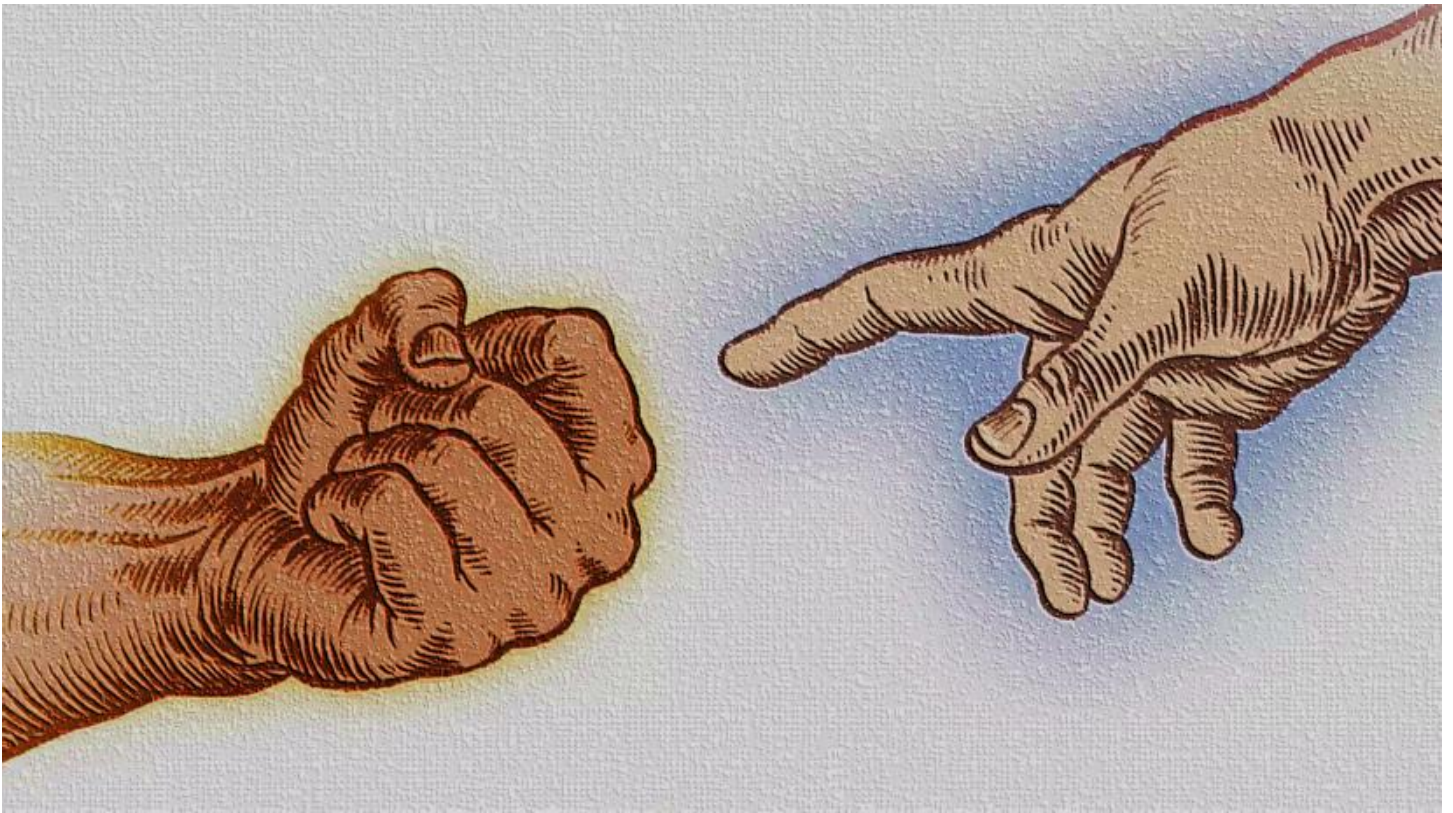
close to what Jesus had in mind. His goal is a rebuke gentle enough to result in reconciliation.



The difference between forgiving a repentant and a unrepentant person has to do with right relationship afterwards. If someone confesses, implying a repentant attitude, whether on their own, or through a rebuke, forgiveness brings healing and reconciliation. Forgiving an unrepentant person is always the right thing to do and while relationship is possible from your side of the equation, it will not be right until that other party recognizes their sin against you, and repentantly

confesses, thereby accepting the forgiveness already given. Can you see how this is simply acting like God?

This is Christianity, as I said. It is so unbelievably important to embrace, so incredibly simple to understand, and yet, so extremely difficult to do. It's so difficult to do that for the majority of the last 2,000 years, people have made Christianity about everything else. Christianity, as it is practiced by insiders, and so, as it is regarded by outsiders, bears little, to no, resemblance to what Jesus actually instituted and what His Apostles clearly taught.



I encounter multiple people every week who range from having no time for organized Christianity, to having no time for Christianity at all. The reason given by almost all of them is the same as the sentiment famously given by Gandhi. "I might believe in Christianity if I ever met a Christian." People in our community, whether claiming some belief in Jesus or not, are convinced that we church going Bible thumpers are at least as dysfunctional as the rest of the population... We're worse though, because we say we're not, and that makes us hypocrites in their eyes.

I believe the problem is that Satan has distracted Christians from Christianity. If we spent a tenth of the energy on obeying Christ's command to love, that we do on all the other stuff, we'd show the world a very different church.

Can we be Christians and not love God? This is my question today. Please think about it - can a person who does not love God be a Saved, Born again, Spirit-filled Follower of the Lord Jesus Christ? Why then would we think that we can be Christians and not love the church? Let's think about this for a moment. What

gives us the impression that we are Christians if we do not truly love other Christians?

There are all kinds of deceived people in this crazy world. All the way from atheists who say, "God is dead," meaning that there never was a God, and they're so smart they killed the idea of Him. To agnostics, who say, "God? I don't know." To which God replies, "I like that. 'God, will I pass?' Gee Mr. Spicoli, I don't know." To SBNRers, the fastest growing cult in America. SBNR stands for spiritual but not religious. It used to be hippy flower children heard saying, "I'm a very spiritual person, but I'm so full of myself, and something else, that I don't believe in organized religion." Well, it has exploded across the board and continues to grow because within it anything goes... Any mixture of beliefs and practices are acceptable even if they are bizarre and contradictory. Whatever ridiculous, nonsensical ideas that float your boat are praiseworthy. It's founded in the postmodern belief that Truth is every bit as dead as God is to an atheist. With no universal, absolute Truth at all, whatever wacky fantasy world you prefer is your truth and it must be celebrated by all others. Everyone else must go along with your delusion.



Finally, to the deceived people I call the Unchurchers. Unchurchers are people who ironically say, “I love Jesus, but not church.” It is impossible to love Jesus and not love His church, which is His Body on earth, and His Bride in Heaven, for whom He suffered and died.

The church is people, specifically people saved by Christ. You cannot love God, if you do not love His children at least enough to fellowship with them in harmonious unity once a week!

If a person rejects the commands of God, they reject God Himself as God, which means that they love themselves, their ideas, their physical life, their family, friends, future potential, and the present world more than they love God. The Bible is crystal clear on this score... Anyone loving their life more than God, will lose their life eternally (Matthew 6:24, Luke 14:26, 16:13, John 12:25, I John 4:20).



What are the commands of God? All of God's commands contained within the entire Bible, can all easily be summed up, as they are many times, even by Jesus Himself. It is of course, loving God above all

else, with all you are, and with all you have, and then, because of that, it is loving others, at least as much as you love yourself... If a person rejects that in thought, word, or practice, they reject the God commanding that... They are all misotheists - haters of God. They hold their own human, subjective, poorly informed, opinions as truer than the Bible and I fear that we Christians have done a poor job showing an alternative.

What can we do? Well, we could take Christ seriously enough to pray every day that God would give us the power to love Him by actually loving one another enough to, as the Apostle Paul put it in Philippians 2:3, "Regard one another as more important than yourselves." When we do that, we proclaim Jesus Christ to the world.

My friends, if you would just love, it would be enough. That is Biblically true. Love - everything starts with that impossible to keep command.

Only Jesus, my friends, only Jesus can inaugurate, and establish, and perfect, God's love in you. That is the goal of this life and that is the reality of the next life.

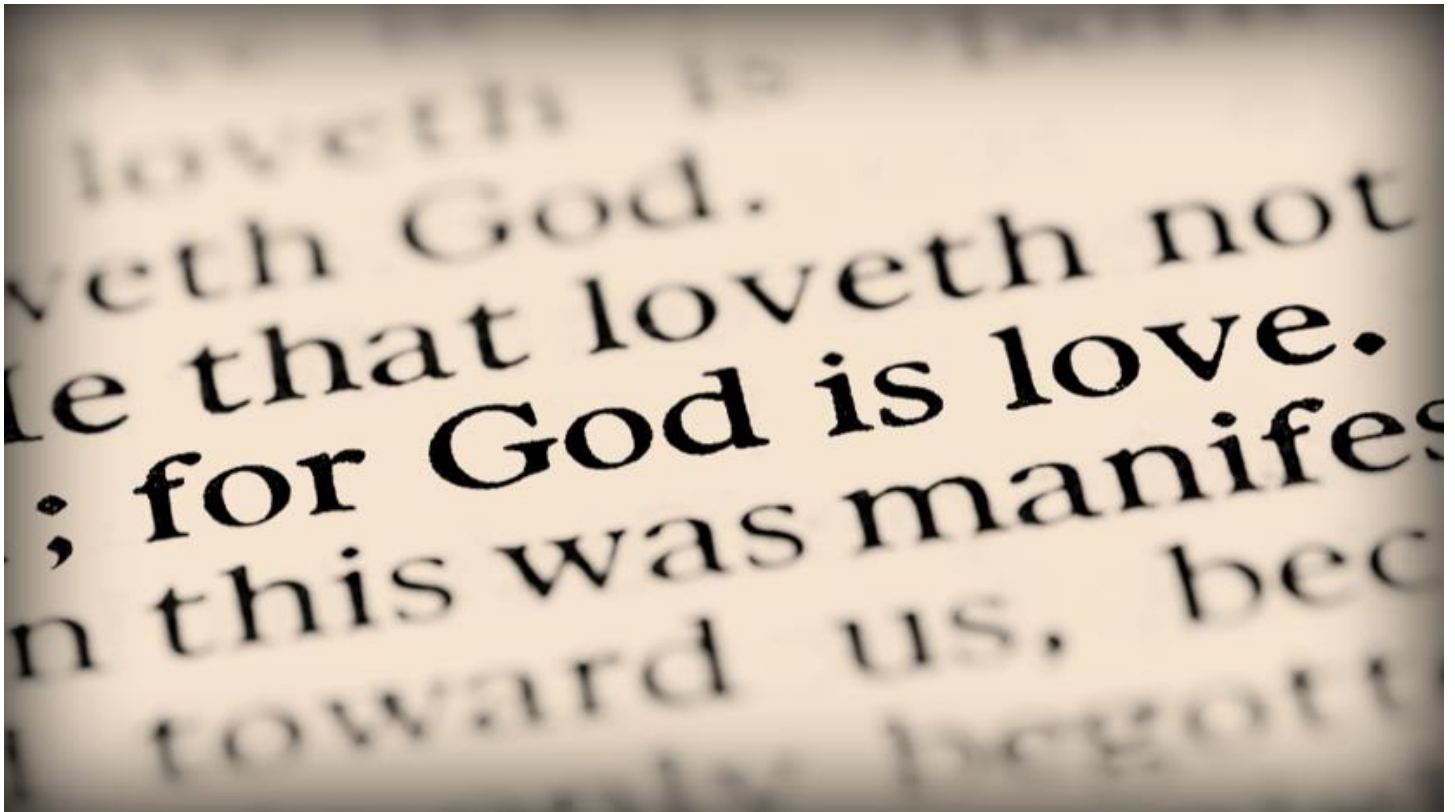
Proactively, carefully, willingly, intentionally, avoid giving offence. Why did John write? So that we might not sin and thereby perfect joy... Unity in the Body is joy perfected.

Work as hard as you can to not sin against the church. It starts with recognizing the first sin against the church is your absence from her. Once engaged, it is so much easier to be polite, aware, compassionate, interested, helpful, kind, patient, gentle, considerate, peaceable, self-controlled, and even self-sacrificing, than it is to be contritely sorrowful and humbly honest confessing to someone how your self-centeredness offended them.

It is also much easier to be more open, more agreeable, less sensitive, less delicate, less snowflakey (new word), than it is to forever be the victim waiting for someone to apologize and then struggling with having to forgive them. Stop taking offense where no offence was intended. Stop looking for the insult - that's easier than being constantly dramatized (new word usage).

It's about allowing the Holy Spirit to enable you to be an actively involved participant focused on the positive, rather than the negative. If you look for what's wrong, you'll find it. Any fool can see the problems, a person of Godly character proactively fixes what they can, and ignores the rest. The Fruit of the Holy Spirit "Kindness is the quality of heart that overlooks the broken garden gate and calls attention to the flowers beyond." As I said last week, you can choose to be a blessing, or you can choose to be a curse... In the immortal words of the Grail Knight, "Choose wisely."

Once a mess has been made, then we need to be humble. Humble enough to take ownership of our failure and ask for forgiveness and humble enough to recognize our own imperfection and grant forgiveness to those asking. We, because of God's love, fix the mess to return to right relationship again. Church unity is the most important way we proclaim Jesus in this world.



I John 2:5&6, 5but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

We start with a contrast. The liar of verse 4 who does not keep the Lord's commandments is juxtaposed, or set against, the one who "Keeps the Lord's Word," here in verse 5. The outcome is that instead of being a liar, who does not have the Truth in him. A liar, who walks in the darkness. A liar, who does not practice the Truth. A liar, who has a dysfunctional relationship with God and

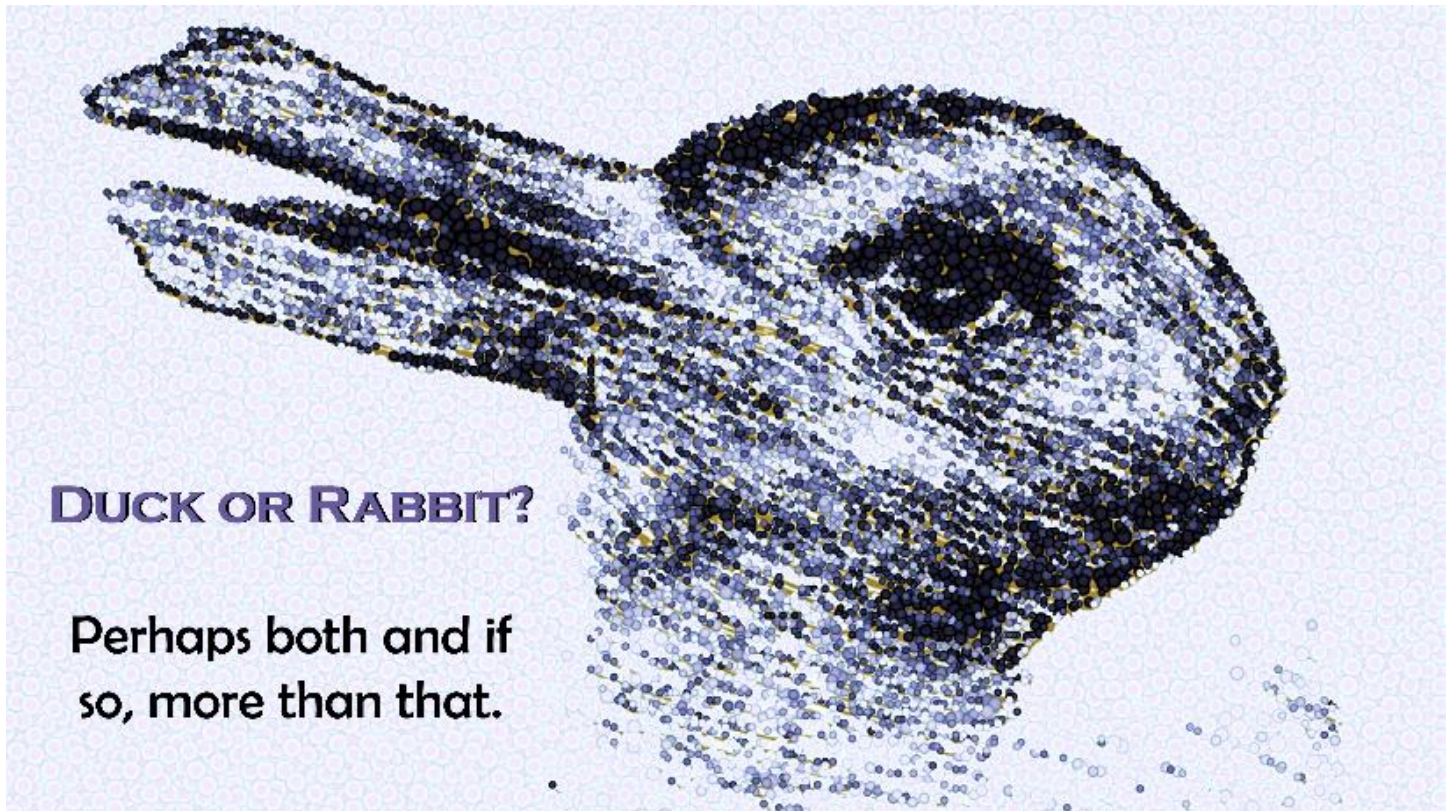
with the church. A liar, who has deceived himself and who has made God a liar. A liar, who does not abide in Him... All these ways to describe a non-Christian. A person, who by Jesus' definition, behaves exactly like their father, the Devil, who is himself "A liar and the father of lies."

Instead of being that disobedient, unrighteous, unholy, unsaved wretch, those in the opposite camp who actually strive to love their fellow Christian in the power of God have had the "Love of God" truly "Perfect" within them.

It's a simple black and white, yes, or no, question... To which camp do you belong and to which camp do you want to belong. There are only those two camps and there is no overlap... Which person are you? Which person do you want to be?

The person in verse 5, is described as "In him the love of God has truly been perfected." That's super cool, but what does it mean? It could either be objective, or subjective. It could objectively be that God's love for the person has been perfected, or it could be

subjectively the person's love for God has been perfected. How can we choose?



Having a much better understanding of Greek than we did only a few decades ago we can now recognize what John has done here. He constructed the phrase in such a way that we now know, what his original audience knew - he intended the phrase to function in a plenary fashion. Not only does that mean that it's both objective and subjective, but it also means that it is progressive and qualitative, resulting in a sum of the parts that is greater than those parts... In plain English that means that for any person who actively obeys

(“Keeps”) His Word. That’s the first part... “Whoever,” that means anyone - it’s all-inclusive - no one need be excluded, any person who τηρέω (tā-rě-ō), keeps, obeys, observes, maintains, follows, “His Word.” “His word,” is Jesus personified, and His singular “Word,” is comprehensive as in the totality of God’s Word which can be summed up in the single command to “Love one another.”

So far, it is, anyone who actually loves others... Well, in that person the altruistic love, which is the ideal Agapê, that can only come from God, has been perfected... It has had its intended effect - it’s completed, or finished, or fully accomplished. It is τελειόω (tě-lā-ō-ō) - to reach the goal entirely.



God's Agapê love has been perfected in that person as they have received God's love for them and now reflect His love God to Him and to those around them. God's love flows through a human being as if he or she were a conduit reaching out through a tactile human touch to other human beings. See what we're saying? God's love is perfected because He can love His children through the tangible interaction of His children.

Show me that church and I'll show you a group of people in whom "The love of God has truly been perfected" because they actively "Keep His Word" to "Love one another."

The last phrase in the verse confirms that and is just what I've been saying, this is the way we know that we are Saved. It is the supernatural Truth manifested in the natural reality that confirms that the Bible is True, that God exists, that Christ came and paid for all of our sins, that we have been Born again and filled with God's Holy Spirit and that we - all of us - Christians. It is the only way the world can see God's love before experiencing it themselves.

I administered Holy Communion and Last Rites to our Miss Nell. We talked for a bit and the only thing she spoke of was love. Love for God, the love she felt from Him, the love she had for all of you. In the end it was only love. In giving her Communion, I mentioned, as I usually do, the Apostle Paul's words that as often as we share Communion, we proclaim Jesus as Savior to the world (I Corinthians 11:26). What it means is that when we share Communion we do so because we are brothers and sisters in Christ. It is an act of love for Him that extends to a love for each other. The way the world knows that we are His disciples is by our love for one another. Our witness and testimony are tarnished

to the degree that we are dysfunctional in our relating to each other.

When we love each other, it is proof that we love God, which is itself proof that God has poured His love into our heart... That means that when we love each other God's love is perfected for all to see.

The translation of a word in verse 6 grumps me out. The word is translated as "Ought." I've brought it up before. The translators are trying, but I feel they could do much better job with this word. Most have "Ought," the Holman Bible and the NLT are no better with "Should." The NIV, and the Readers Version are much better with "Must." The word is ὀφείλω (ō-fā-lō), meaning to owe, or be in debt, or to be obligated. It is to be bound to a duty one is obliged to perform and so it is of course something you ought to do, something you should do, but as a required duty of obligation. The word "Ought" in the dictionary actually means something you have to do, but it is a word also used to indicate something that is merely likely, as in, "Two minutes ought to be enough time to cover this word." It's that second nuance that I don't like. In this context,

it means that if you say you belong to Christ, you “Must” act like Christ.

In His human life and death and life again, “God’s love has truly been perfected.” If we are His, let the same thing be said of us.



1 John 2:7-11, 7Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. 8On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the

darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. 9The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. 10The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Starting off with “Beloved,” confirms that God is speaking to Christians. He was not, through John, telling them anything that they didn’t already know. “You’ve heard this before; you were taught these things when you came to Faith.” Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34&35).

That was from that night on the essence of living the Christian life. They knew that and we know that... How well we do it is another thing, but we all know.

Verse 8, confuses people... I'm not telling you anything new, but now I'm going to tell you something new. Again, it's just a misunderstanding about Greek rhetoric. Verse 8 is a pivot phrase. It completes the previous thought and introduces the next thought as a different way to see the same thing.

The topic does not change, but a new way to think about it is presented. It starts with the phrase "On the other hand," which is a reasonable way to translate the single word πάλιν (pä-lēn), meaning "Again."

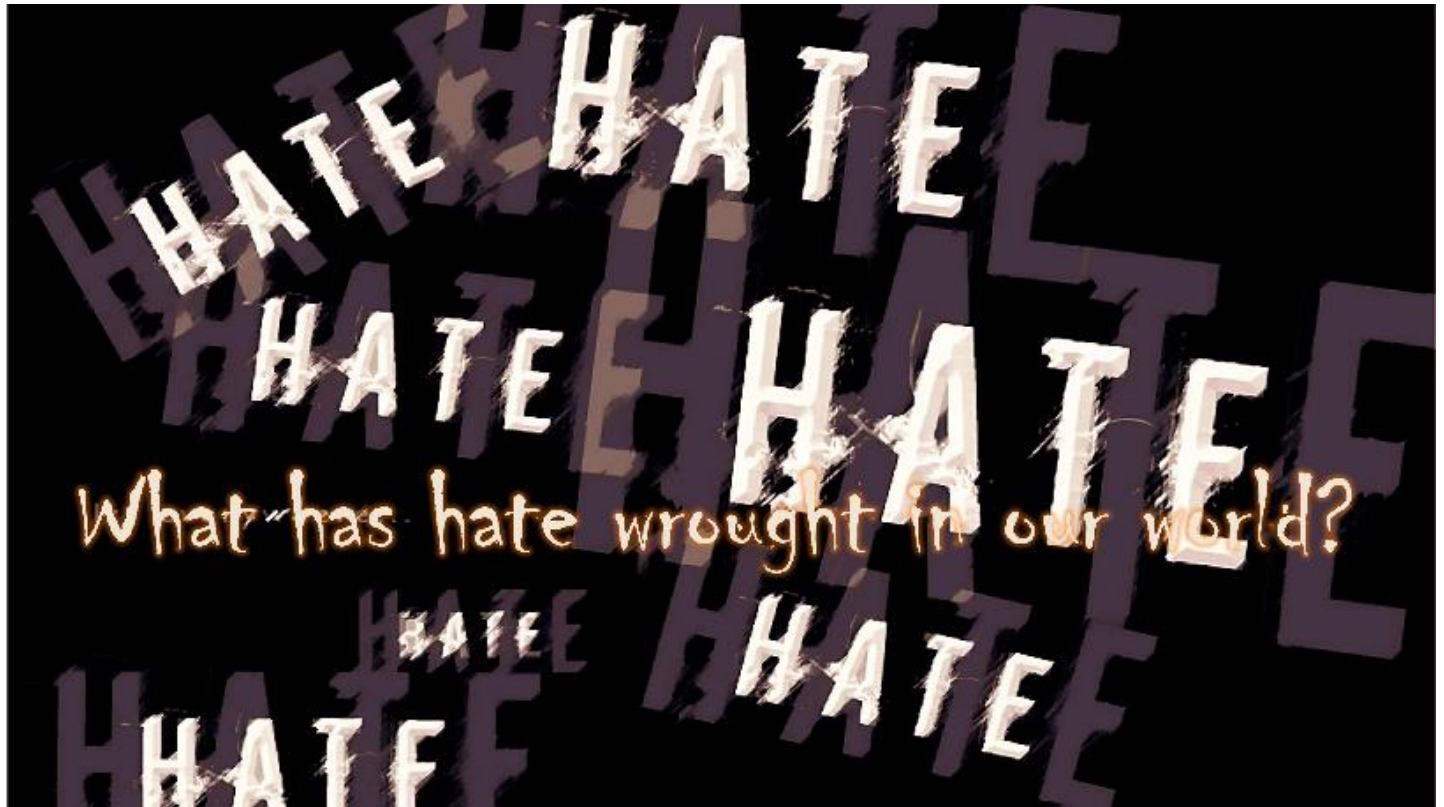
In this case, it's emphatic and alerts the audience that John is going to contrast what he just said with something else to make the point even clearer. The contrasting point is that it really is a new commandment when we obey it.

There are several ways to convey the idea of newness in Greek. Most notably νέος (ně-ös) the word giving us our word new and καινός (kī-nös). John chose καινός, which stresses newness as a quality, rather than νέος meaning new as in non-existent before. John is telling us that when we behave as Christ, by loving one another, in obedience to that "New Commandment" He

gave in the Upper Room to John and His fellow Apostles years before, which is nothing new to John's audience, becomes new again in practice. When it is actually done.

The second half of verse 8 brings up the metaphors of "Darkness" and "Light" again. They cannot have a different meaning here, than they did before, because there is nothing to indicate a different meaning. As a reminder "Darkness" here mean unholiness as in common, normal, typical, which is to say sinful. "Light" is the opposite, it is holiness, as in, set apart and uncommon. "Darkness" results in dysfunctional relationship, while "Light" results in right relationship.

When Christians are Christians the "Darkness" cannot hold sway - the "Light" shines. When the "Light" shines in that way it points directly to the efficacious work of the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Believers.



Pivoting into verse 9 we see the plain no-nonsense explanation, “The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness.”

The word “Hate” is used for dramatic, rhetorical, contrast. All that’s needed is a lack of love and under the right circumstances it will become hate. This is your proof that I’m not misinterpreting God’s Word. Any person who claims to be a Christian and yet fails to love the church is deceived... Unsaved. Just as we started out today, you cannot be a Christian if you don’t love God. That’s obvious and easily accepted, yet we question whether it follows that you cannot be a

Christian if you don't love the church. God could not have put it more plainly, bluntly, and quite frankly, more repetitiously, than He has here.



Verse 10 is a positive restatement with the added bonus of once again demonstrating that love for one another will lead us to take the appropriate steps to not be stumbling blocks to each other.

If we are not stumbling blocks to each other, it means we are harmoniously fellowshiping with each other in right relationship just as Jesus does and just as He commanded us do.



Verse 11 is mostly repetitious. Why? It is to repeatedly drive home the same point over and over from every angle possible. It speaks to the importance of the Message. The added bit at the end about being blinded is another way to reiterate the deceptiveness of this issue.

How many millions upon millions of people throughout time have assumed that they were Christ Followers but proved through their neglect in loving the church that they really followed their own lusts rather than the Lord's command?

Do not be deceived. If you do not have an ever-growing love for God and for His other children, you are not being obedient to Jesus and you are not being led by the Holy Spirit.

That's the bad news. The good news is everyone starts in that boat. It is an easily fixed problem because Jesus has already provided the way.

