**Lessons from a Lockdown**

**Volume II**

Rommel J. Casis

Day 64

**1 John 2:7-11**

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

Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.

***Questions for Personal Reflection:***

1. What is the “old command” and the “new command” John refers to here?
2. Is there a brother or sister or kind of person I do not or find difficult to love? Why?
3. How am I in expressing love to my brothers and sisters? Would they say I am loving?
4. Is there a brother/sister I don’t even want to talk to or who I avoid fellowshipping with because of negative emotions I feel towards him/her? What should I do?
5. Do I struggle with hatred for anyone or any group? Why? What should I do?

***Insight:***

The command to love is old because it has been taught since the Old Testament. The Israelites were taught to love God and love their neighbor. But it is also new in the sense that in Jesus we have a new model on how to love. Jesus exemplified in the New Testament the love God has been teaching since the Old Testament.

Being in the light means loving our brothers and sisters. So being in the light is not just about being open with our sins. We need to love in order to be in the light. Hate brings darkness into our lives. We cannot hate and be in the light at the same time.

There is so much hatred being generated in the world today. Politicians use a platform of hate to get themselves elected. Organizations are formed on the basis of hate for other groups. Rallies and other public gatherings are held in order to espouse hatred. The media creates click bait headlines that would trigger people’s hatred. Online trolls would create memes and spread false information to spread hatred. As Christians we should not participate in nor approve of any of these things.

John writes about hating a fellow brother or sister. Why would Christians hate fellow disciples of Jesus? Perhaps one reason would be because the Christian fits the kind of person we hated growing up. If we grew up poor, we might have resented people who were rich, or fellow poor people like us. If we grew up well-off, we might be wary of those who grew up “on the wrong side of the tracks” or disgusted with fellow rich folks who looked down on other people. We might have taught to be prejudiced against people of a certain dialect, skin color, religion, ethnicity, culture, political beliefs, ideology or race. So hatred could be something we grew up with. Another reason we might have hate is because a fellow Christian or group of Christians hurt us or someone or something we love. Maybe we were offended by their words or actions. There may be other reasons for our hatred of fellow disciples but there are no reasons acceptable to God. Being in the light requires us to get rid of all hatred for all people especially our brothers and sisters.

Hatred brings darkness that makes us stumble. When we have hatred in our hearts, the smallest things offend us. Hatred makes us take negatively even statements and actions intended to encourage us. Hatred causes us to explode in anger over the smallest things. Does this describe us? A Christian must not have hatred in his heart.

Sometimes we “cure” our hatred by being indifferent. We make our hearts feel numb towards the person we hate so that we feel nothing for him/her. We just avoid the object of our hate. This is easier to do now that we don’t have to meet in person. Now it is easier to hide from Christians we don’t like. But that is not repentance. Repentance is doing the opposite of the wrong thing we used to do. To repent of hatred we need to love. Unless we love the person we hate, we have not repented and we are still in darkness.

So it is not enough that we do not hate our brothers and sisters, we must love them in order to be in the light. God is love and God is light. Love and light always go together. We cannot have one without the other.

Neither can we have love and light without God. We need God in order to love people. If we have difficulty loving, the first person we need to go to is God. Confess your hatred and ask forgiveness. Ask God to help you love the person you hate. Ask help from other Christians. Then finally talk to the person you need to learn to love. After all, you can’t love a person you don’t talk to.

Let us choose to be in the light by loving our brothers and sisters.