

Bible Greek VPOD - Intermediate Greek Lesson 8

The law of love applied to one another (2:9-11)

1 John 2:9-11

The one who says he is in the light and hates his brother, he is until now in the darkness. 10 The one who loves his brother remains in the light and a trap is not in him. 11 But the one who hates his brother, he is in darkness. And in the darkness he walks and has not seen where he goes because in the darkness he is blind in his eyes.

ὁ λεγων ἐν τῷ φωτι εἶναι και τον ἀδελφον αὐτοῦ μισῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτια ἐστιν ἕως ἄρτι. 10 ὁ ἀγαπῶν τον ἀδελφον αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ φωτι μενει και σκανδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν· 11 ὁ δε μισῶν τον ἀδελφον αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ σκοτια ἐστιν· Και ἐν τῇ σκοτια περιπατεῖ και οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπαγει, ὅτι ἡ σκοτια ἐτυφλωσεν τους ὀφθαλμους αὐτοῦ.

Introduction

The application of the law of love involves the interaction of one believer with another. The love, one for another, means that those within the Church must pay close attention to their attitude towards each another. This attitude should reflect the true character of Christ and the truth that the believer holds. Self-examination of the believer should reveal a love of Christ, a love of truth, and an application of the love principle in relationship of one to another. Does one think of himself more than he ought to? Does this attitude of self love germinate to consume the believer's whole attitude toward others? And when one finds him or herself with the characteristics of the old self, full of self love, is it at the expense of others? The fruit of the old self is naturally consumed with self-love and always exhibits itself in one's attitude, what God calls the "faces" or "countenance," and moves to the mouth causing all manner of destruction. Destruction in relationship leads to destruction within the local Church's mission and eventually when left unchecked, destruction overtakes the Church altogether.

False love (2:9)

2:9 – ὁ λεγων ἐν τῷ φωτι εἶναι και τον ἀδελφον αὐτοῦ μισῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτια ἐστιν ἕως ἄρτι.

(The one who says he is in the light and hates his brother, he is until now in the darkness). The one who says, λεγων, is a Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg, with def. art., "to say," "speak." The active participle means this person is actively saying, or is in a state of professing to be in the light. You might say his occupation or rather his preoccupation is to say he is in the light yet he hates his [Christian] brother. This one, John adds, at the moment, is in darkness. Do you know a brother or sister like this? It is hard to love your brother or sister in Christ at times. Some of the nicest people I know are Christians, but on the other hand, some of the meanest people are also Christians. Yet we are supposed to be of a better character, a people ripe with fruit expected of a new creature, exhibiting: love, joy, peace, kindness, slow to anger, longsuffering (cf. Gal. 5:22; 2 Peter 1:5-8). Yet we let the moment get us. We get in the flesh and some people stay in the flesh and never seem to grow in grace. They are legalistic and try to rule over others all in the name of Christian correction. They want to let you know what is wrong in your life and correct you. These people are hard to love. They take on the role of the Holy Spirit, overstepping their bounds and they bring insult to God.

The object of this hatred is directed at a brother, an ἀδελφος (adelphos) a.m.sg., with def. art., "the brother," and here the metaphorical is meant and it means a fellow Christian. A brother in Greek, as it is in English, may mean a physical brother born of the same father or mother. It may also mean a physical descendent of the same ethnic group, the same nationality as in a fellow Levite or in a broader sense, a Jew. A brother can also have a metaphorical sense meaning someone who is united by a common interest or calling. It is this last sense that is meant here. This brother is a brother who has been called by God - a Christian, one who is in the family of Christ, identified with His death, burial and resurrection. The definite article brings out the precise nature of the common union that the two individuals have.

Hate is another participle, μισεω (miseo) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg, “to hate,” “to pursue with hatred.” The absence of the definite article with the participle makes the meaning an “ing” word. He, right now, actively hating his brother.

For this enlightened person who hates his brother, John says he is in “the” darkness. The definite article used with noun τη σκοτια makes this a particular place or thing. In this case σκοτια is used metaphorically meaning “of ignorance of divine things, and its associated wickedness.” John uses the word to mean the realm of everything that is at enmity with God, earthly and demonic. Another aspect of this realm of darkness is that there is associated with it power. So the saying, “Christ rescued us from the power of darkness.” The power of darkness is associated with the “power of sin” (cf. Col. 1:13). Another metaphorical use of the word is in reference to secrecy, “whether what is done therein is good or evil” (cf. Matt. 10:27). As can be seen the realm of darkness is a powerful realm that has its victims trapped, there is no way of escape if not for the enlightening work of God that opens the eyes revealing its true character.

While the present tenses give the immediate sense of the story and the active voice defines the extent of the damage, the locative tells of the location of the situation, the locative of sphere. The two extremes of light and darkness speak of the division between good and evil, between the realm of Christ and the realm of the Devil. The one who is as in the light has darkness exposed. The other side is the realm of darkness. Evil lurks in the darkness where lies are told and the truth is manipulated to the point of calling good evil and evil good. For the person who hates his brother, he is seen as in the realm of evil darkness, a place where no one wants to find him or herself. For darkness is the realm of the Devil, there are traps there that destroy.

The key to this verse is this little phrase “he is until now,” εστιν εως αρτι lit. “he is until at time,” some translate, “is in darkness still.” Now that they have been enlightened, the truth of their actions is now brought to light. There were, no doubt, people in the church who let their hatred for their brother get so bad that John has to address the problem. Conflict within the Church was common then and is still common. We are after all fallen, even though we might be saved, the old self is still battling within us (Gal. 5:17), it is a constant conflict and Satan is actively seeking whatever manner of discord and destruction he can muster. John means to address the problem and provide a solution.

True love (2:10)

2:10 – ὁ ἀγαπῶν τον ἀδελφον αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ φωτι μενει και σκανδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν (The one who loves his brother remains in the light and a trap is not in him). In contrast to the one who hates his brother is the one who loves his brother. And for this person, the one who αγαπαω (agapao) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., “loves” the brother, there is protection in the form of not being caught in a trap.

First the apostle identifies the position this person occupies, that is, he is in (the Greek preposition εν (en) “in,” or “with”) the φως (phos) d.n.sg., with def. art., “light.” Again the definite article speaks of the “realm” of light. We get the English word photo and all its derivatives from this word. The word means “to give light” and in the physical sense expressing light as seen by the eye. When used metaphorically light is seen as reaching the mind. Vine’s notes, “Light requires an organ adapted for its reception (Matt. 6:22). Where the eye is absent, or where it has become impaired from any cause, light is useless. Man, naturally, is incapable of

receiving spiritual light inasmuch as he lacks the capacity for spiritual things, 1 Cor. 2:14. Hence believers are called ‘sons of light,’ Luke 16:8, not merely because they have received a revelation from God, but because in the New Birth they have received the spiritual capacity for it.”¹ The position of this person is described as μένω (meno) Pres. Act. Ind. 3sg., “to remain,” “abide,” he or she remains in the light since love is the result, the fruit displayed.

The second phrase of verse 10 is και σκανδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν “and a trap is not in him.” The word for trap is σκανδαλον (skandalon) n.n.sg., meaning “the movable stick of a trap or trigger where the bait is placed by which the trap is sprung,” “a person or thing which one is drawn (entrapped) into error or sin,” “a temptation to sin.” Most translate this “a stumbling” or “occasion of stumbling,” but this word is stronger and serves to capture the essence of the helpless condition that results from an irresistible thing. When used metaphorically, the word means a spiritual draw into sin. There is a Christian principle concerning one’s character that one is known by his or her behavior, his or her word, and the slanderer can do no harm because his or her character speaks for itself (Ps. 15; 1 Peter 2:12). The idea here seems to be that an enlightened person does not cause another to stumble by his or her actions or words. This enlightened person does not set traps for others and watch as they fall for the bait and are helplessly caught up in the fight for survival.

The preposition is translated “in” him. “In” has the sense “there is no stain in him,” or “there is no offense in him.” The main idea is “that which gives offense or causes revulsion, that which arouses opposition, an object of anger or disapproval, stain.”² So the interpretation “in him is no stain or fault.” Here we find the root idea of the preposition, namely, “within,” and when used with the personal pronoun is a locative and again is the locative of sphere. This person lives in the sphere of light so that the sphere of the trap is not in him. Because he is in the light and loves his brother, there is no stumbling-block or offense to others that would deter them from fellowship. They will know we are Christians by our love, so love your brother, do not hate your brother for that serves as a trap for sin, not as a blessing which brings edification. The trap only serves to bring an argument, to bring in discord and broken fellowship. The trap is left for the person who is in the realm of the darkness, it is not befitting of the person in the realm of the light. There is a wise saying, “Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions” (Pr. 12:10).

False love (2:11)

2:11 – ὁ δε μισῶν τον ἀδελφον αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ σκοτια ἔστιν (But the one who hates his brother, he is in darkness). In contrast δε (de) conj., to the one who abides in the light is the one who is right now in a state of hatred as the present active participle of μισεω (miseo) “to hate,” “pursue with hatred,” conveys. This person hates the ἀδελφος (adelphos) a.m.sg., with def. art., “the brother” and is said to be in the σκοτια (skotia) d.f.sg., with def. art., “the darkness.” What a picture! The repetition and contrast adds to the literary impact.

¹ W. E. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Peabody: Hendrickson) p. 680

² BAG, p. 753

Και ἐν τῇ σκοτια περιπατεῖ και οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει, ὅτι ἡ σκοτια ἐτυφλωσεν τους ὀφθαλμούς αὐτοῦ. (and in the darkness he walks and has not seen where he goes because in the darkness he is blind in his eyes). The apostle goes on to describe the spiritual state and walk of the person who hates. Here we are presented with a man who possesses the source of the light but does not use it. A picture may be drawn of a person walking at night with a torch but, even though it is pitch black, he does not light up the torch. The expression “in the darkness” (ἐν τῇ σκοτια) “he is walking about” (περιπατεῖ), provides the sense of the condition as seen with the present tense “he continues to walk about,” and here, the picture is aimlessly walking about. There is no direction, no light to guide.

And to further paint the picture of this insane act of self dependence, the apostle says, “and he has not seen where he goes.” The perfect expresses the act as complete, the damage is done, the destruction complete. The picture is of a man walking about without regard for his surroundings - destroying whatever comes under his feet without regard, without care, without any thought – a clumsy disregard for anything and anyone around him. The verb εἶδω (eido) Perf. Act. Ind. 3sg., “to see,” “to know” has the primary meaning of knowing by sight and used here, to know in the sense of “to have regard for one.” This person has no regard for his brother!

And finally, the direction of this person is aimless as the directional particle ποῦ (pou) part., “where?” “In what place?” is used. This person has the true light available to him (verse 8) but because he refuses to walk using the light that now shines, he walks about aimlessly not producing fruit because he does not use the light. The only fruit that darkness produces is destruction and discontent (Cf. Rom. 7:5; Matt. 12:33).

The reason for his aimless motion is found in the fact that his eyes have been blinded because of the darkness. The reason is found in the conjunction ὅτι (hoti) “that,” “since,” or “because” the darkness (the subject, the thing causing the blindness) blinded his eyes. The verb of this phrase is τυφλοῦ (tuphloo) Aor. Act. Ind. 3sg., “to blind,” “make blind,” in the NT metaphorically “to blunt the mental discernment,” “to darken the mind,” and affects the ὀφθαλμός (ophthalmos) a.m.pl., with def. art., “the eyes” of him. The aorist is most likely a constantive aorist, that is, viewing the action as a whole, not focusing of the beginning or end, but rather describing the action or state as just occurring. Similar to Jesus’ response to the disciples question concerning Him returning to Jerusalem to the Jewish leadership’s blindness of John 11:10: “But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” What is the difference between these two? In John 11:10, the Jewish leadership are not enlightened, their spiritual eyes are not opened, whereas here in 1 John, these brothers are saved but do not use their spiritual eyes to see what it means to love the Lord and to love your brother (1 John 4:20-21).

The Puritan Richard Baxter (1615-91) is credited with the saying, “In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity.” Scripture is dogmatic about some things and as such we are to be in unity about the essentials. In the early Church they did not have all the years of debate and development of theology that we have today. They had a harder time as the variant views sprung up and the leadership had to deal with each issue, each heresy. But, here, it seems John is addressing one’s behavior with a brother, thinking the best of others and demonstrating the law of love. Putting off the old self and seeking the Lord’s help as you deal with the diversity of growth in the Church environment. May the Lord strengthen and guide you as you walk about in this dark world. As the psalmist declares, so may it be for you always: “For You light my lamp; The LORD my God illumines my darkness.” (Psalm 18:28).

Detailed Analysis

2:9 – ο λεγων εν τω φωτι ειναι και τον αδελφον αυτου μισων εν τη σκοτια εστιν εως αρτι (The one who says he is in the light and hates his bother, he is in at this moment in the darkness) : λεγω (lego) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg, with def. art., to say, speak: the one who is speaking; εν (en) prep., in, by, with; φως (phos) d.n.sg., with def. art., light; ειμι (eimi) Pres. Inf. to be, exist; και (kai) conj., and, even, also, indeed; αδελφος (adelphos) a.m.sg., with def. art., brother; αυτος (autos) pers. pron. 3g.m.sg., him; μισεω (miseo) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg, to hate, pursue with hatred: he who hates; εν (en) prep., in, by, with; σκοτια (skotia) d.f.sg., with def. art., darkness; ειμι (eimi) Pres. Ind. 3sg., to be, exist: he/she/it is; εως (hoes) conj., till, until; αρτι (adv., just now, this moment, now at this time, at this very moment.

2:10 – ο αγαπων τον αδελφον αυτου εν τω φωτι μενει και σκανδαλον εν αυτω ουκ εστιν (The one who loves his brother remains in the light and a trap is not in him) : αγαπαω (agapao) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., love: the one who loves; αδελφος (adelphos) a.m.sg., with def. art., brother; αυτος (autos) pers. pron. 3g.m.sg., him; εν (en) prep., in, by, with; φως (phos) d.n.sg., with def. art., light; μενω (meno) Pres. Act. Ind. 3sg., to remain, abide: he/she/it remains; και (kai) conj., and, even, also, indeed; σκανδαλον (skandalon) n.n.sg., the movable stick or trigger of a trap, a person or thing which one is drawn (entrapped) into error or sin; εν (en) prep., in, by, with; αυτος (autos) pers. pron. 3d.m.sg., him; ου (ou) neg. part., not; ειμι (eimi) Pres. Ind. 3sg., to be, exist: he/she/it is.

2:11 – ο δε μισων τον αδελφον αυτου εν τη σκοτια εστιν (And the one who hates him his brother, he is in darkness) : δε (de) conj., but, moreover, and; μισεω (miseo) Pres. Act. Part.n.m.sg., with def. art., to hate, purse with hatred: the one who hates; αδελφος (adelphos) a.m.sg., with def. art., brother; αυτος (autos) pers. pron. 3g.m.sg., him; εν (en) prep., in, by, with; σκοτια (skotia) d.f.sg., with def. art., darkness; ειμι (eimi) Pres. Ind. 3sg., he/she/it is.

και εν τη σκοτια περιπατει και ουκ οιδεν που υπαγει οτι η σκοτια ετυφλωσεν τους οφθαλμους αυτου (and in the darkness he walks and has not seen where he goes because in the darkness he is blind in his eyes) : και (kai) conj., and, also, even, indeed; εν (en) prep., in, by, with; σκοτια (skotia) d.f.sg., with def. art., darkness; περιπατεω (peripateo) Pres. Act. Ind. 3sg., to walk, from the compound of περι (peri) about, around, and πατεω (pateo) to tread: he/she/it walks; και (kai) conj., and, also, even, indeed; ου (ou) part., not; ειδω (eido) Perf. Act. Ind. 3sg., to see, know: he/she/it has known; που (pou) part., where? In what place? υπαγω

(hupago) Pres. Act. Ind. 3sg., to lead under, bring under, to withdraw one's self, to go away, from the compound of υπο (hupo) by, under, and αγω (ago) to lead, bring, go: he/she/it goes away; οτι (hoti) conj., that, since, because; σκοτια (skotia) d.f.sg., with def. art., darkness; τυφλω (tuphloō) Aor. Act. Ind. 3sg., to blind, make blind: he/she/it blinded; οφθαλμος (ophthalmos) a.m.pl., with def. art., the eye; αυτος (autos) pers. pron. 3g.m.sg., him.