

An Attack on Relationship

1 John 3:10-16

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1 John 3:4-9 Summary: Sin is lawlessness and is of the devil... the importance of being born of God.

Applications from this passage...

- True Christians will not have a lifestyle of habitual sin.
- Those with habitual sin are of the devil.
- Christians are made in right standing before God when they trust in Christ alone for the salvation.
- True Christians are born again.

1 John 3:10-11 – Two essentials: righteousness & love

In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. ¹¹For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

What is the difference between *the children of God* and *the children of the devil*?

John has already introduced the idea of being a child of God (1 John 3:1, *that we should be called the children of God* and 1 John 3:9, *born of God*). He has already written of some being *of the devil* (1 John 3:8).

- Those who practice righteousness and love of the brethren are a child of God, all others are *of the devil*.

Is it too harsh to say some are *children of the devil*?

Jesus called people *children of the devil* in John 8:41-45. Jesus' point was important, establishing the principle that our spiritual parentage determines our nature and our destiny.

- If we are born again, and have God as our Father, it will show in our nature and destiny.
- Those whose father is Satan or Adam, will also show in their nature and destiny — just as it showed in these adversaries of Jesus.

Which is more important, righteousness or love?

Both of these are essential. Righteousness without love makes one a religious Pharisee, and love without righteousness makes one a partner in evil.

- We are never to be righteous at the expense of love, and never to love at the expense of righteousness.

- Real love is the greatest righteousness, and real righteousness is the greatest love.

v11 – How is it that *this is the message that you heard from the beginning*?

John was remembering this message to **love one another** that Jesus commanded:

John 13:34 – *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.*

Why is the love of one another important?

Perhaps some have thought that because Christians talk about a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ” that it is only us and Jesus who matter.

- But how we treat others — how we *love one another* — really matters before God.

1 John 3:12 – An example of hatred: Cain.

Not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

Of what was Cain an example?

Cain was a negative example of one who was not right with God (*his works were evil*) and who hated his brother. When there are two children of God who are both right with God, there *will* be love.

- Cain is a good example of the failure to love.
- We can presume that Cain had a godly upbringing that should have equipped him to love, but he chose not to. Cain's disobedience came from a lack of faith and that disobedience led to hatred ...

Hebrews 11:4 – *By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous*

Cain's disobedience and hatred was based in pride and made him miserable (Genesis 4:5). Cain refused the warning God gave him, and gave into the sin of hatred (Genesis 4:6-7). Cain's sin of hatred led to action against the one he hated (Genesis 4:8). Cain was evasive about his sin of hatred, and tried to hide it. But God found him out (Genesis 4:9-10).

1 John 3:13-15 – Love is evidence of the new birth

Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Why shouldn't we marvel if the world hates us?

We shouldn't be surprised when the world hates us; but we should be surprised when there is hatred among the body of Christ.

What should give us assurance of our salvation?

A love for the people of God is a basic sign of being born again. If this love is not evident in our lives, our salvation can be questioned. If it is present, it gives us assurance.

- The place of hatred, of jealousy, of bitterness you find yourself in is a place of **death**. You need to pass **from death over to life**.

How do we know that we have passed from death to life?

This means knowing two things...

- First, **we know** that we were dead.
- Second, **we know** that we have passed to life from death.

To pass **from death to life** is the reverse of the normal.

- We all expect to pass from life to death; but in Jesus, we can turn it around.

What does mean to love the brethren?

This speaks to our pursuit of fellowship. If we love the brethren, we will want to be with them — and even if we have been battered and bruised by unloving brethren, there will still be something in us drawing us back to fellowship with the brethren we love.

How is it that *whoever hates his brother is a murderer*?

To hate our brother is to murder him in our hearts. Though we may not carry out the action, we *wish* that person dead.

- Or, by ignoring another person, we may *treat* them as if they were dead.
- Hatred can be shown *passively* or *actively*.

John seemed to have in mind the teaching of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount regarding the true fulfillment of the law...

Matthew 5:21-22 – *You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment*

Is this saying that murder is an unforgivable sin?

You know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him: To live in the practice of murder — or to have a life style of the habitual hatred of our brethren — is a demonstration that we do not have *eternal life abiding in us*, that we are not born again.

Does claiming to be a Christian make it so?

Some who claim to be Christians really are not. There are three tests to measure the proof of a genuine Christian: the truth test, the love test, and the moral test.

- If we believe the Bible to be true, if we show the love of Jesus to others, and if our conduct has been changed and is becoming more like Jesus, then our claim to be a Christian can be proven true.

1 John 3:16 – How love shows in our life.

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

What is love?

How we define love is important. If we define love the wrong way, then everyone passes, or no one passes, the love test. It is helpful to understand the vocabulary of love from the Greek language of the New Testament:

- *Eros* refers to *erotic* or sexual love.
- *Storge* refers to family love, the kind of love there is between a parent and child, or between family members in general.
- *Philia* refers to brotherly friendship and affection. It is the love of deep friendship and partnership. *Philia* love might be described as the highest love that one is capable of without God's help.
- *Agape* described a love that doesn't change. It is a sacrificial love that gives without demanding or expecting re-payment. It is love that loves even when it is rejected. *Agape* love gives and loves because it wants to; it does not demand or expect repayment from the love given — it gives because it loves, it does not love in order to receive.

How is the agape love of God contrasted with the cultural concept of love?

The culture's concept of love is as a fleeting emotion, something you can fall into or out of. Or that it is transactional; I love you so that you will love me back.

- But the agape love of God is an act of the will that loves without expecting anything in return

How can misunderstanding different kinds of love cause people to be hurt?

Confusion occurs when a person tells another, “I love you” meaning one kind of love, but the other person believes he means another kind of love. Often a man has told a woman, “I love you,” when really he had a selfish love towards her. Sure, there were strong feelings in the heart — but they were feelings that *wanted* something from the other person.

- Divorce is rampant because couples don’t understand the agape love of God.

How do we know what love is?

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us: Real love isn’t merely “felt” as an inward feeling; it is also shown by demonstration — and the ultimate demonstration was the giving of Jesus on the cross.

Romans 5:8 – *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

It isn’t the death of Jesus in *itself* that is the ultimate demonstration of love; it is the death of Jesus together with *what it does for us* that shows the epitome of love.

How is it that we would not know what love was all about if not for the work of Jesus on the cross?

People have an innate ability to pervert the true meaning of love, and pursue all kinds of things under the guise of looking for love.

- The creation reveals God. But creation, in and of itself, does not teach us that God is a God of love.
- We needed the death of God the Son, Jesus Christ, to ultimately demonstrate that.

How is it that we should demonstrate our love for the brethren?

Since we are sent with the same mandate Jesus was sent with, we must demonstrate our love by laying *down our lives for the brethren*. Jesus’ words *As the Father sent Me, I also send you* (John 20:21) seem to be ringing in John’s ears.

- Of course, we are also called to love our enemies and those who hate us (Matthew 5:44), but John calls us to a more basic test — if we can’t even love our **brethren**, what kind of Christians are we?

What does it mean to *lay down our lives*?

The demonstration of agape love often involves *sacrifice* — the laying down of our lives for others.

- We often consider ourselves ready to **lay down** our lives in one great, dramatic, heroic gesture; but for most of us, God calls us to lay down our lives piece by piece, little by little in small, but important ways every day.

Setting aside our own agenda in order to help someone is demonstrating the agape love of God.

Philippians 2:3-4 – *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

What applications do we see from this discussion?

- God wants us to be assured of our salvation.
- Demonstrating righteousness & love assures us of our salvation
- The agape love of God is radically different from the culture’s concept of love.