

“Love One Another”

July 5, 2015

1 John 3:11-24

I. Introduction

Throughout the years people have displayed many different symbols to show that they are Christians. They have worn special pins in the lapels of their coats; they have worn particular jewelry around their necks; they have worn particular clothes; and today we can add tattoos to the list. There is nothing wrong with any of these, if one feels it is his calling. But there is a much better sign—a universal mark that is to last until Jesus returns. [Turn to John 13:34-35](#). Jesus established love—agape love—as the universal and perpetual mark of a Christian.

John wrote in [1 John 3:10](#): “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.” Two signs of a true child of God are 1) right living and 2) loving his brother. In today’s Scripture, the emphasis is on loving one another.

Earlier in chapter 2, we were told that loving the brothers is a matter of light and darkness. If we do not love one another, we cannot walk in the light, i.e. we cannot have fellowship with God, no matter how much we may protest that we are Christians. But in this section John went further and wrote that loving the brothers is a matter of life and death—he wrote in [verse 14](#): “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.”

Having stressed the importance of love, John contrasted the children of God with the children of the devil. Instead of being characterized by love, John wrote that Satan’s children are characterized by 3 different attitudes toward the children of God.

II. Satan’s Children

A. Satan’s children murder God’s children. Murder is the ultimate act of hate and demonstrates the absence of love in the most extreme way. This is the level on which Satan himself exists—Jesus said in [John 8:44](#), “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him.”

John wrote that Cain was an example of a life of hatred—the story of Cain and Abel is found in [Genesis 4:1-16](#). Cain and Abel both brought sacrifices to God. Abel brought an animal sacrifice that was acceptable to God. Cain, on the other hand, in his own man-made ideals, ignored God’s requirement and brought the fruit of the ground for his offering. Cain was only masquerading as a believer. His disobedience and the fact that he killed his brother revealed that he was of the evil ones. He was a child of the devil.

Cain's attitude represents the attitude of the present world system. In [John 15:18-19](#) Jesus said, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you." The world hates Christ for the same reason Cain hated Abel—Christ shows up the world's sin and reveals its true nature. The ungodly resent the righteous because, through their righteous actions, they *also* expose the false beliefs and wicked practices of those who are evil. When the world, like Cain, comes face-to-face with reality and truth, it can make only one of two decisions: repent and change, or destroy the one who is exposing it. The 2nd attitude of Satan's children is . . .

B. Satan's children hate God's children. In God's eyes, hatred is the moral equivalent to murder—John wrote in [verse 15](#), "Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer." Only a small percentage of people actually murder someone, but had the circumstances been favorable and the consequences less severe, others would have been guilty of murder. The only difference between murder and hatred is the outward act of taking life. The inward intent—the attitude—is the same.

The question isn't, "*What did you do?*" but "*What did you want to do? What would you have done if you had been at liberty to do as you pleased?*" This is why in Matthew 5 Jesus equated hatred with murder and lust with adultery. In God's sight, hatred is the moral equivalent of murder. If left uncontrolled, hatred leads to murder.

John reminded his readers "that no murderer has eternal life in him." That doesn't mean that a believer could never commit an act of murder, or that someone who has committed murder can never be saved. It does mean that those who continue in hateful attitudes and who regularly harbor murderous thoughts demonstrate an unchanged, unrepentant heart and, unless they do repent, they will spend eternity as one of Satan's children in hell.

The Christian life is both positive and negative, [Isaiah 1:16-17](#) says, "Stop doing wrong, learn to do right!" Christian love involves doing good to brothers. Cain is an example of false love; Christ is the example of true Christian love. Jesus gave His life for us that we could be saved. John went on to say that, "we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." Christian love involves sacrifice and service. Jesus didn't just talk about His love; He died to prove it.

Self-sacrificing love is required of us as believers. It may not be necessary to give our lives, but we need to be ready to give all that we have. It is easy for people to talk about "loving the brothers" and neglect to actually help a single believer. Love is an action verb. Christian love is to be personal and active.

C. The 3rd attitude of Satan's children is: **Satan's children are indifferent towards God's children.** The selfish indifference of unbelievers towards Christians is in sharp contrast to the generous, compassionate love that believers exhibit toward one another and even to the world; e.g. look at the lack of response by the world for Christians that are being persecuted and killed in the Middle East. John wrote about this indifference of Satan's children to God's children in **verse 17**, **"If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?"** The children of the devil often have the world's goods at their disposal. If and when they do give sacrificially to anyone or anything else, they are motivated by selfishness. They are trying to pacify their consciences, satisfy their emotions or, like the Pharisees, to bring honor to themselves and not to God.

III. God's Children Love with a Sacrificial Love

Having considered the attitudes of murder and hatred and indifference of Satan's children toward God's children, John turned to the attitude of God's children toward their brothers in Christ. With Jesus as THE standard, Christians are to love one another with an agape love—a sacrificial love. They are to love with actions and in truth. To love in truth means to love a person genuinely, from the heart not just from the tongue. John listed 3 blessings that will come to a believer who practices Christian love for his brothers in Christ.

A. First, living in love gives assurance of salvation. John wrote in **verses 19 & 20**: **"This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything."** A *"condemning heart"* or an *"accusing conscience"* is one that takes away a believer's peace and assurance. Sometimes the heart accuses us wrongly because as **Jeremiah 17:9** put it, **"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"** The answer is: *"God knows the heart."* A Christian who walks in love has a heart open to God and knows that God never judges wrongly.

No Christian should treat sin lightly, but no Christian should be harder on himself than God is. If God will forgive us our sins when we confess them, we need to be just as ready to forgive ourselves. If you are practicing genuine love for the brothers, your heart must be right before God, for the Holy Spirit cannot grow the fruit of love if there is habitual sin in your heart. Living in love gives assurance of being a child of God.

B. Living in love brings answered prayer. Love for the brothers produces confidence toward God, and confidence toward God gives boldness in asking for what one needs. This doesn't mean that answers to prayer are earned by loving the brothers. Rather, it means that your love for the brothers proves that you are living in the will of God where God can answer your prayer—**verse 22** says, and we **"receive**

from him anything we ask, because we obey His command and do what pleases Him.” Or as James 4:3 puts it, “You do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

In John 15:7 Jesus said, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.” A believer should keep His Father’s commandments because this pleases God. A Christian who lives to please God will discover that God finds ways to please His child. Psalm 37:4 says, “Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.” When our delight is in the love of God, our desires will be in the will of God.

C. Living in love leads to living in Jesus Christ. Living in Jesus Christ is the ultimate goal for a believer who wants to have assurance of salvation and enjoy answers to prayer. In John 15:1-14, Jesus compared Himself to a vine and the disciples to the branches of the vine. As long as the branch draws its strength from the vine, it produces fruit. But if it separates itself from the vine, it withers and dies. Jesus wasn’t talking about salvation; He was talking about bearing fruit. The instant a sinner trusts Christ, he enters into union with Christ; but living in Christ is a moment-by-moment responsibility. Living in love leads to living in Jesus Christ.

When a believer obeys God and loves the brothers, the indwelling Holy Spirit gives him peace and confidence. The Holy Spirit abides with every believer forever, but when the Spirit is grieved, He withdraws His blessings. Every member of the Triune God is involved in the “love life” of a believer. God the Father commands us to love one another; God the Son gave His life on the cross, the supreme example of love. And God the Holy Spirit lives within us to provide the love we need. Christian love isn’t something we work up when we need it. Romans 5:5 says that “God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” and this is the constant experience as one lives in Christ.

IV. Conclusion

For John, the differences between Satan’s children and God’s children are obvious. Those who murder, habitually hate, or are continually self-centered and indifferent to the needs of others do not have eternal life. But those who, as part of their repentance from sin and trust in Christ, have renounced murderous, hateful attitudes and all cold, selfish indifference to the needs of others give evidence that they have been born again. In place of those sinful traits, Christians demonstrate genuine love to others, especially to fellow believers—James 1:27 puts it this way, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

In closing, let me ask these questions. Is your love for your fellow Christians seen as evidence that you are a child of God? Do you give sacrificially to help God's children? That's not just monetarily but how about your time, your talents, your gifts? Are the results of your love seen in your confidence in God, the answers to your prayers and to your living in Jesus? Do people know you are a Christian by your love?