

BROTHERLY LOVE IN A WORLD OF HATE

1 John 3:13-18

Intro: I hope that you all are spending some time each week reading through 1 John as we go through this wonderful epistle in our Sunday morning services. There is much to be gained by reading the Word of God for ourselves which cannot be gained in any other way. All of us who know the Lord have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, and one of the main reasons the Lord Jesus has given Him to us (because remember that the Holy Spirit is a Person), is to guide us into the truth. And from what our Lord said about what the Holy Spirit teaches us, it is clear that there is nothing that the Holy Spirit loves to do more than to teach us about Christ. And He does even more than teach us in the ordinary meaning of the word. He brings us into a living relationship with the Lord. He makes us know what fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ really means.

When you read the epistles of John, or the Gospel which bears his name, or the Book of the Revelation which he also wrote, you are reading the works of the man who walked in fellowship with the Lord longer than any of the other writers of the NT. When the Apostle John wrote the five books which carry his name, all of the other writers of Scripture were in heaven. He was the lone survivor of the apostles. He had walked with the Lord on earth longer than the Apostle Paul, or the Apostle Peter, or Luke or any of the others. And we ought to keep that in mind as we read his works. I am not minimizing the writings of any of the other writers of Scripture, but I am trying to get you to see what riches we have in the writings of John because he had known the Lord so long and had walked in such intimate fellowship with Him over many, many years. We see not only the Lord in the writings of the Apostle John, but we see the heart of the Apostle John himself. No one could have written 1 John but someone who had a deep, deep love for the Savior. That is why it is so important to read what he has written. I know that there have been many believers who have loved the Lord with all of their heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, but if you want to see an illustration of what it means to love the Lord that way, the way we should all love Him, then read the writings of the Apostle John.

You probably remember that originally John and his brother James were called “sons of thunder.” But those years of walking with the Lord, and learning of the Lord, had made marvelous changes in the heart and life of John. All through 1 John we see his insistence upon the truth of God, but

that strength was coupled with a tenderness which is easily discernible to the careful reading of an epistle like 1 John. John's love for the Lord makes us want to learn all that we can about the Lord, and beyond that, to be like the Lord. Wouldn't you love to have heard the Apostle John say what he wrote in 1 John 3:2, "We shall be like Him"? You can be sure that he said it many, many times during the many years of his life.

So when you read through 1 John, he will make you think about the Lord, but think also about John himself. He was one who can really tell us what it means to walk in fellowship with the Lord. Remember what he wrote in 1 John 1:3 about fellowship.

In our study of this epistle we got down last Sunday morning as far as the thirteenth verse of chapter 3. And we have seen that after the Apostle John had given us the tests by which we can know that we are saved (if we pass the tests), and after he had given us those three great verses at the beginning of chapter 3, he began to add to what he had already said about the tests that he had already mentioned. He had said in verse 3 of this chapter, that if we have that hope of being like Christ, then we need to spend our time here on earth in pursuit of holiness. This is what he meant by purifying themselves "even as He [our Lord] is pure." At the end of verse 5 he said concerning the Lord Jesus, "and in Him is no sin." The opposite of sin is "righteousness," practical and personal righteousness. But then in verse 10 of chapter 3 he slipped into a subject that he had used as one of the tests of salvation, and that is the love that we have for others who are members of the family of God. And he stays with this subject all the way to the end of chapter 3.

Now let us go back to chapter 2 to remind ourselves of what John said the first time that he referred to our love for each other in the family of God. After speaking about sin, and then about obeying the Lord by keeping the commandments of Scripture, he introduced our love for each other in verse 7 of chapter 2. (Read verses 7 through 11.)

Then, in chapter 3 verse 11 he slipped into this subject again of our love for each other, tying it together with what he had been saying about sin in contrast with righteousness. What are we to learn from a verse like verse 10, especially the latter part of that verse? *We see that all of the tests are related to each other.* The Apostle John was not saying that we need to pass at least one of the tests, or most of the tests, but he was saying that we need to pass all of them! So it was not either this one or that one, but

he was saying this one and that one and the next one until you can I can see that we pass all of them!

Verse 11 says that this commandment to love each other was what his readers, probably mostly Jewish, had “heard from the beginning,” referring to Leviticus 19:18 and our Lord’s quotation of it in Matthew 22:39. And then the Apostle John cited Cain as an illustration of a person whose life showed that he was not a child of God. Being the son of Adam and Eve did not make him a child of God. Being their firstborn son did not make him a child of God. Nor did the fact that he brought an offering to the Lord mean that he was a child of God. All of those were pluses, but they were not enough to indicate that Cain was saved. The fact that he killed his younger brother made him a murderer. But Cain’s primary sin was hatred, and his hatred expressed itself in murder.

But before we get to the details of Cain’s crime, the Apostle John gave his readers

I. A TRUTH TO REMEMBER (1 John 3:13-15).

And he gave this in the form of a command. They were not to be taken by surprise. They were not to wonder. They were not to marvel. At what? “If the world hate you.”

At this point the Holy Spirit was reminding the Apostle John of some words which the Lord had spoken to all of His disciples in what has been called, The Upper Room Discourse. Let me read to you from John 15 what the Lord told His disciples that night shortly before the Lord’s arrest and crucifixion:

17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.

23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause (John 15: 17-25).

We live in a world that is characterized by hatred for anything that has to do with the living and true God, with the Lord Jesus Christ, with the Bible, and with salvation. And the world has no place for us, the people of God. Probably the basic difference between love and hate is that *love means acceptance; hate means rejection*. Thank God, not all hate ends in murder, but it did in the case of those who hated the Lord Jesus. Hatred is expressed in the words, “We will not have this man to rule over us” (Luke 19:14). These words which were used by the Lord Jesus in one of His parables, He preceded with the words, “But his citizens hated him.”

So, as the Apostle John went on to say in verse 14, when someone loves the brethren, those who are members of God’s family, those who are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, you can be sure that God has done a work of grace in his or her heart. None of us would be here this morning if we have not passed out of spiritual death into spiritual life. And let me say that if any of you is here this morning because someone else made you come, and not because you want to be here, take this as a warning that your own heart is giving you. “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” When we get to chapter three in 1 John, the Apostle has already given us the words that we find in chapter 2, verses 15 through 17. (Quote.)

Verse 15 adds to all of the evidence that the Apostle John has already given us that the person who is living in sin, cannot possibly have eternal life. If you love the world and its sin, but not God in His holiness, you can’t possibly be saved. I am not saying that on my own; that is what the Word of God teaches us. And so it is absolutely true.

But let us follow the Apostle John into the happier side of the truth. And this has to do with:

II. THE PERCEPTION OF TRUE LOVE (1 John 3:16-18).

The word translated “perceive” in verse 16, is the Greek verb, γινώσκω, which is usually translated, *know*. It is a word of certainty, of assurance. We are not guessing about this; it is too important for that. This is the truth. And the words “of God” are not in the original text, but our translators are justified in using them because the Apostle John was talking about the love of God. It is only the love of God which gives us a proper definition of love. Much that the world calls love is nothing more than lust. But if you want a true definition of love we look at what the Lord Jesus did for us. And to understand it fully you have to think of the kind of a Person the Lord is, and contrast that with the kind of people we were before we were saved, and, in many respects, we still are!

There was not a single thing, not a single characteristic, that would attract the love of God to us. As Paul said in Romans 5:8, “But God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

See also 1 John 4:9, 10. We are not saved because of our love for God. We are saved because of God’s love for us. If we honestly look at ourselves, we all have to wonder why God would love us, and why He would send His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die for us. The answer to that is the grace of God. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love, because He first loved us.” We are only capable of loving God and loving each other “because He first loved us.” And it is only possible “because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5).

As the Apostle John concluded verse 16 after saying that our Lord “laid down His life for us,” he went on to say, “and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” And then he illustrated what He meant in verse 17. We have a responsibility toward each other even in material things. We have a special responsibility toward the brothers and sisters we know, who are a part of our church. The Apostle John was not saying that we have a responsibility to society. But we need to care for our own.

Lastly in our text for today, we have:

III. THE APOSTLE’S APPEAL (1 John 3:18).

Addressing all of the Lord's people as "my little children," as an elder brother to those who were younger in the faith, which in this case would apply to all to whom John was writing, he encouraged them not just to talk about what they ought to do, *but to do it!* Here the Apostle John sounds like James, doesn't he? In James 1:22-25 we read these words:

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

And the Lord Jesus, as He instructed His disciples in the Upper Room said (and His words are recorded in John 13:17), "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Concl: Because the Lord loved us, He did in Christ's death, and He continues to do in Christ's life, that which is for our greatest good. And that should be our attitude toward each other. We begin by prayer. We continue by seeking to be godly examples to each other. And then we seek to help our brothers and sisters in the family of God, especially in our own church, as together we seek to live for the Lord as we await the day when we will be with Him and each other forever.