

Significance of Love Revisited

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[0:00] Two weeks ago we started working our way through a longer section of 1 John and that's! 1 John chapter 3 verses 4 through 24. To refresh your memory a little bit about this section, the primary aim of it is to combat the false teachers who are corrupting the fundamentals! of the faith.

So these verses further amplify and emphasize the moral test that we've already seen by John so far. Verses 4 through 10 convey that genuine believers practice righteousness and then verses 11 through 24 remind us that genuine believers practice love towards fellow believers.

And John was very concerned that Christians know how to tell the truth from the false, the genuine from the artificial, and true believers from false ones. We know that he presents tests to help determine the validity of anybody's claims to be a Christian.

And 1 John 3.10 is the key verse in this passage because it ties the two sections together. 1 John 3.10 says, 1 John 3.10 says, made it halfway through verse 10, and in those verses, John revisited the significance of sin.

So for some review, let's look at verses 4 through 10a again and just read those real quick. John says, whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him there is no sin. Whoever abides in him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen him nor known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for his seed remains in him, and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this, the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God. John is not suggesting there that the child of God will never commit a single act of sin. Instead, he's describing a way of life, a character, or a prevailing lifestyle. So in other words, the believer won't be characterized by a life of sin. So from John's earlier statements, it's obvious that the Christian, while enjoying a position or standing before God of sinlessness because of our identification with Christ, will still sin on occasion and will need to ask God for forgiveness. But it's also apparent from John that a genuine believer won't live in continual sin. And John gave us four reasons why the believer will avoid continual sin. The first was that sin is lawlessness. The second was that Jesus came to take away believers' sins. The third is that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. And the fourth is that sin is incompatible with the work of the Holy

[3:54] Spirit. All of these added up to the obvious point of the passage, and that's that lifestyle differentiates true believers from unbelievers. That's why John said the person who sins is of the devil. The person who does what is righteous is of God. As we move into new material tonight, John is going to revisit the significance of love. And these verses start the second half of the letter.

For the most part, John has finished arguing with his opponents about the place that sin has in the life of a Christian. Don't think it's going to get any easier, though, because now he's going to focus on how much we need to love each other, because that's his dominant concern in the last half of the letter. And he speaks to his loyal readers, but it's obvious that he also keeps his eye on the opposition as well. Apparently, John's enemies then downplay the value of positive behavior toward others.

In fact, they're treating John and those who follow John's message with disdain. And John's point is that their lack of love for other Christians discredits their movement entirely. Tonight, we're going to cover 1 John 3.10b through 15, but we need to start reading at the beginning of 3.10 just so the second half of the verse makes sense. So here are 1 John 3.10 to 15.

John writes, And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil, and his brother is righteous.

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.

[6:05] The first thing to notice from this passage is the command to love. Again, that's the command to love. And we see that command to love in verses 10 and 11. So listen to those verses one more time.

John says, In this, This command to love is directed toward the community of faith, so it's directed toward other believers.

And the present tense of we should love calls for a continuous display of love in the family of God. Christian love is fundamental to being a child of God. And John's already established that believers are characterized by righteousness and an abstinence of a life of continual sin.

But now he adds that they also are persons who love one another as part of the normal course and the constant habit of their life. Looking at this passage fits really well with what Pastor Don covered last week when he looked at John 3.16 because Pastor Don reminded us of the three Greek words for love.

The first Greek word is eros, and it's never used in the New Testament. It refers to erotic love. The second word, phileo, means friendship.

[7:33] And you also hear it as brotherly love. It's a love of the brethren, and it's a brotherly sort of love that you might have between friends. The third word, which is the highest form of love, is agapao, and you also hear that as agape.

And that's God's love. And that, of course, is the type of love John was talking about when he wrote John 3.16 When he said, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Because John talks about loving the brethren, you could jump to the conclusion that he must have used the word for brotherly love here. Instead, John used the word agape or agapao.

And Christians are to love each other with the same type of love that God has for us. That's why it makes it such a challenge. So where do you think John got that idea?

We'll take a look at that here for just a second. Keep your finger in 1 John and flip back to the Gospel of John. We're going to look at John 13, 34, and 35.

[8:46] This is John 13, 34, and 35 are where we're going right now. And in these verses, Jesus is speaking. And Jesus says there, A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. So listen to those verses one more time. Again, this is Jesus speaking.

And he says, A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. So far, that's pretty easy to do, isn't it? But then the hard part comes next when he says, As I have loved you, that you also love one another.

By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. Anything Jesus said once is important, but Jesus repeated himself elsewhere in John's Gospel.

If you flip over a couple chapters to John 15, 12 through 14, you'll see this again. John 15, 12 through 14.

[9:57] And again, Jesus is speaking here. And he says, This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

You are my friends, if you do what I command you. Once again, he says, This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.

Then just a few verses down, in case we didn't get that already, look at John 15, 17. Here's what Jesus said in John 15, 17. He said, These things I command you, that you love one another.

What word for love do you think Jesus used in these verses? You're right, he used the agapao again. Every time he said that word, he was talking about the highest form of love.

So Jesus gave the command to love a new standard, because Moses had said, love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus said, The new standard is to love one another, as he has loved us.

[11:04] So love is to serve as a distinguishing characteristic, of discipleship. Christians love and support for one another, enable them to survive in a hostile world.

Jesus was the embodiment of God's love, so now each of his disciples should embody Christ's love. And that love is a sign to the world, as well as to every other believer.

So the true test of a Christian's love is his willingness to sacrifice for the sake of his brother. If you go back to 1 John 3, 11, then John simply repeated what he heard Jesus say several times.

You could probably bet that if it's recorded this many times in John, Jesus probably said that several more times along the way as well. So looking back at the beginning of 1 John 3, 11 again, how long does it say that believers have known about the command to love each other like Jesus loves us?

It says, From the beginning. So the question is, what does he mean when he says, From the beginning. From the beginning of what? And that refers to the beginning of their Christian lives.

[12 : 15] This was part of the instruction they received from the very first day of their salvation. And it's a message that's grounded in the very nature of God. So does this mean that a true believer will never have moments where he fails to love another believer?

So some people think that a true Christian could never hate another Christian, but we know that's naive and contrary to what we see in the Bible and just personal experience.

Because biblical history provides examples of believers in the true God who acted like unbelievers in their attitudes and actions. For example, King David was guilty of murder, which is the ultimate expression of hate.

But we can no longer harbor hatred and say that we walk with God. That's the point here. You may hate occasionally that you can't have hate as a permanent lifestyle and still be a true believer.

Because if the Christian has a proper relationship with the Christ of love, he will love his brother as the general rule. I put this quote from Matthew Henry in your handout, but look at what Matthew Henry said about the command to love.

[13 : 25] He said, A Christian sees the foundation and reason of Christian love. He discerns the weight and value of the Christian redemption. He sees how fitting it is that we should love those whom Christ hath loved, and the consequence will be that there is no occasion of stumbling in him.

He will be no scandal, no stumbling block to his brother. He will conscientiously be aware that he neither induces brother to sin nor turn him out of the way of religion.

Christian love teaches us highly to value our brother's soul and to dread everything that will be injurious to his innocence and peace. So after struggling through the old English quote there, I had to throw in the homespun quote of J. Vernon McGee to back that up.

And here's what J. Vernon McGee said. He said, We are to have a concern for our Christian brother. We are to be helpful to him. It does not mean that you necessarily care for his ways, his conversations, or the things that interest him.

It does not mean you have to run up and put your arms around him. It means that you are to be concerned for him. You cannot harbor hatred in your heart against another believer. We'll see in the next chapter that this love is not something that is sloppy and slippery by any means.

[14 : 41] It does not mean that you are to help that is to be taken in by every Tom, Dick, and Harry who comes along. We are warned to be very careful indeed and to keep our eyes open that we are to have a love in our hearts for our brethren in the Lord.

This love is to be a concern love, a love that acts, a love that does something beneficial. So listen to the last part of that quote again.

He says, This love is to be a concern love, a love that acts, a love that does something beneficial. So it's not enough just to say that you love the brethren.

we're expected to actually demonstrate that we love the brethren. So now that John has reminded us about the command to love, he moves on to the second main point in these verses.

And in verse 12, John shows us the illustration of hate. So we've seen the command to love, now we see the illustration of hate. Verse 12 starts in the middle of a sentence so we'll start reading in verse 11.

[15 : 50] John says, For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, 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 brothers righteous. Before we look at verse 12 in detail, let's do some review of what happened with Cain and Abel.

Some of us actually covered this in Sunday School Sunday as well, so this will be some fresh review for you. But flip to the front of your Bible and find Genesis 4 and we'll look at Genesis 4, 1 through 7 first.

So in Genesis 4, 1 through 7, Moses wrote, Now Adam knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain and said, I have acquired a man from the Lord.

Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord.

[16:54] Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but he did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry and his countenance fell.

So the Lord said to Cain, why are you angry and why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? If you do not do well, sin lies at the door and its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.

Abel's sacrifice was the best that he had to offer. It's the firstborn of his flock and their fat. And there are no similar descriptive words for Cain's sacrifice. So Cain must have brought a token gift of his produce to the Lord, but Abel brought the very best of what he had.

So Abel's offering was acceptable because it was in every way obedient to what God must have told him and must have revealed even though it's not recorded in Genesis. Cain, sustaining the divine instruction, just brought whatever he wanted to bring and that was just some of his crop.

So look at Genesis 4-7 again. God said to Cain, if you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door and its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.

[18:15] So the Lord's words challenged Cain to do better. He still has the possibility of turning, evidently with God's help, to please God. So the Lord forewarned Cain then that the right action would be rewarded, but the wrong course of action meant giving sin an opportunity to destroy him.

So the consequences of his reaction to God's correction are far more far-reaching than the initial sin itself. So if he pursues sin's anger, it will result in sin's mastery over Cain's life, but it's his decision. It's still possible for Cain to recover at that point if he chooses to do the right thing. And if we didn't already know what Cain chose to do, look at verses 8-10.

Verses 8-10 of Genesis 4 say, Now Cain talked with Abel his brother, and it came to pass when they were in the field that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Then the Lord said to Cain, Where is Abel your brother? He said, I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper? And he said, What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

[19:25] So now you are cursed from the earth which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.

Cain rejected the wisdom spoken to him by God himself and he rejected doing well in the process. We also see that he refused to repent and so the crouching sin pounced and turned him into a killer. So if you turn back to 1 John now, we'll dig into 1 John 3-12 now that we have that background. Once again in 1 John 3-11 and 12 John said, For this is the message that you heard from the beginning that we should love one another 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 brothers righteous. So scripture presents Cain outwardly as a God worshiper who even offered sacrifice but his murderous actions reveal that inwardly he was a child of the devil.

So that's part of why John keeps going back to what you say has to be backed up by what you do. So on the surface it would look like Cain was doing pretty well because he did bring an offering to the Lord but we learn by what he later did that he really wasn't a true follower of God.

[20:47] And John's original Greek word translated murder could also be translated butcher or slay. Literally the word means to cut the throat. So this shows the brutal violence of that murder.

The motivation behind Cain's initial envy illustrates the conflicting nature between good and evil because Cain murdered his brother Abel because the wicked person hates righteousness.

Godlessness then is disturbed by the condemning presence of righteousness in its midst and it would remove the cause of the discomfort if it could. So in Cain's case the inner nature brought

forth the outward action.

Cain was on the devil's side and acted in accordance with his spiritual heritage. The discussion about Cain then leads us into the last section of tonight's study and in verses 13 through 15 John makes three observations about love and hate.

So if you're filling in your handout we have the observations about love and hate. we'll see three of those as we go through verses 13 through 15 John says do not marvel my brethren if the world hates you.

[22:03] 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.

John's first observation is pretty clear from the text and that observation is that the world hates believers. The world hates believers. We see that in verse 13.

John came right out and said do not marvel my brethren if the world hates you. Remember like we've talked about elsewhere in 1 John world is a reference to the spiritual system of evil that's dominated by Satan and all that it offers in opposition to God, his word, and his people.

The world here is the morally evil system opposed to all that God is and all that God holds dear. So in this sense world is the satanic system opposing Christ's kingdom on earth.

Said another way the world is the evil world system whose people respond to righteous Christians the same way as Cain did to Abel. Remember what John said about the world in the first verse of chapter 3.

[23:16] Listen to the last sentence of 1 John 3. 1. He said, Therefore the world does not know us because it did not know him. In light of the world's natural depravity and opposition to God, the child of God should anticipate rejection and hatred.

Such rejection by the world actually attests to the reality that the rejected are indeed children of God. Jesus also warned his disciples, including John, about the world's natural animosity toward Jesus' followers.

And here in 1 John, John is simply repeating what he heard Jesus say. Listen to Jesus' words in the Gospel of John, chapter 15, verses 18 through 21.

Jesus said in John 15, 18 through 21, 21, if the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own, yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will keep yours also.

[24:34] But all these things they will do to you for my name's sake, because they do not know him who sent me. Jesus continued his warning into John 16.

Listen to just the first four verses or so of John, chapter 16. Jesus said, These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble, they will put you out of the synagogues.

Yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God a service, and these things they will do to you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.

So that first sentence of verse four is really interesting, isn't it? That's where Jesus said, These things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.

We see even today that people think they are doing the world a disservice when they attack and kill Christians. Some even claim that they're doing it in the name of God, just like what Jesus predicted here.

[25:43] So with all that Jesus said about the world hating believers, you can see why John felt compelled to remind believers that the world also will hate us. And that's his first observation about love and hate.

His second observation about either love or hate comes in the opening sentence of verse 14. That's where he says we know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren.

So the second observation is that we know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren. When we follow John's command and God's command to love like God loves, we know that we have passed them into life.

So John uses the emphatic form of we here at the beginning of verse 14. That marks the distinct contrast then between the children of the devil who hate and the children of God who are

characterized by love for other believers.

So John appeals to his hearers personal knowledge for assurance of their new life in Christ. They know that the world does not know what they know. They know that the world doesn't realize that they have passed from death into eternal life.

[26 : 55] The tense of the verb have passed there indicates something that's been experienced in the past that has continuing and abiding results in the present and continues on into the future.

Christians experience a permanent passage from death to life at the time of salvation and that salvation is evidenced by our love for other Christians. Salvation is not a result of that love.

So overstating those last two sentences is really impossible. said another way, true Christian love is the result of our salvation rather than something we do to earn our salvation.

When a person is saved, he gets an entirely different attitude toward Christians and this is one of the ways he receives assurance of that salvation. John's third observation about either love or hate starts in the second half of verse 14 and it continues into verse 15.

John says, 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.

[28 : 08] Once again, John mints no words. He says that someone who hates a believer lacks eternal life. Someone who hates a believer lacks eternal life.

A lack of love indicates that someone is spiritually dead. Love is the sure test of whether someone has experienced a new birth or is still in the darkness of spiritual death.

Someone who is characterized by hate has never experienced that new birth. Hatred, then, is spiritually the same as murder in the eyes of God.

The attitude is equal to the act in God's eyes. Hate is the seed that leads to murder as seen in the example of the hatred of Cain for Abel that resulted in that murder.

In that regard, John agrees with the teaching of Jesus as well that outward conformity to God's command is not enough because even a heartfelt desire to break the command is a violation of the command.

[29 : 10] Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 5, 21, and 22. Again, this is Matthew 5, 21, and 22. And Jesus said, 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, and whoever says to his brother, Raka, shall be in danger of the council, but whoever says, you fool, shall be in danger of hellfire.

So the solemn fact remains that hatred of some other believer is the spiritual equivalent of murder, just like a lustful eye is the spiritual equivalent of adultery.

This is where we must remind ourselves of what we discussed earlier. That's where we said the opinion held by some that a true Christian can never hate another Christian is naive and contrary to the Bible and experience.

A Christian might hate or murder someone, but if this happened, he or she would be overcome with remorse. Just think about David when he was confronted with his sin. But if a person is willing to harbor habitual hate or have no remorse at that murder, that person is not a Christian.

[30 : 27] No one whose life is characterized by hate or murder can be a Christian. Then for good measure, at the end of verse 15, John adds a confirming note to his sweeping assertion.

He says, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him, but one who is governed then by a spirit of hate does not possess eternal life.

So this does not mean that the murderer can never be transferred from death to life, because we know that forgiveness is available to everyone who repents, including those who murder. John's statement though is one of a present reality, because no murderer possesses eternal life that comes from abiding in him, unless that murderer does repent.

God's So we said at the beginning of this study tonight that the verses we studied during our last lesson in 1 John and the verses that we studied tonight go together.

1 John 3, 4 through 9, and 1 John 3, 11 through 15, are connected again by that verse that sits in the middle. That's 1 John 3, 10, where he said, Based on that, you probably already have deduced that the application for us in tonight's verses is the same as the application that we made during our last study.

[31 : 52] That simply is this, lifestyle differentiates true believers from unbelievers. Lifestyle then differentiates true believers from unbelievers.

That's why John says, For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. And then later on in verse 14, he says, We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren.

Thank you.