

Loving Our Brethren

I John Series

I Jn 3:11-18

By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. Last week our lesson was on the practice of sin

1. God's will is that we practice righteousness, for in that way we show ourselves to be his children
2. If we practice sin, we show ourselves to be children of the devil
3. 1 John 3:10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. NASB95

B. Illustration

Christians state glibly that they love the whole world, while they permit themselves animosities within their immediate world. World love is a philosophical credo. But loving the world at large can only be done by loving face to face the world that is not so distant. It is foolish to say we love humanity; its people we can't stand.

-- Calvin Miller in The Taste of Joy. Christianity Today, Vol. 38, no. 11

C. I have concluded that the Bible writers knew what they were doing by spending more time and effort on difficult things rather than easy ones

1. One of the things you'll find a great emphasis on in the Bible is loving other people
2. If it were an easy thing to do, we wouldn't have so many verses about it
3. The fact is, it's hard to do and anyone who tries to get you to think otherwise is probably just trying to excuse their own failure at love

D. 1 John 3:10 is a tough verse - It's obvious that a person is a child of the devil if he doesn't love His brother

1. Now you can try to change that one up all you want, but it's hard to get away from truth
2. This morning I want us to look at more of what John says about loving our brothers, and to understand a bit about why this is so important

I. LOVE IS THE MESSAGE FROM THE BEGINNING (3:11-13)

A. John has already said that love isn't a new teaching, but there is a new dynamic to it

1. 1 John 2:7ff (read)
2. Love is something Christians are expected to learn early in their walk of faith
 - a. we are expected to learn about love - what it means
 - b. we are expected to learn from love - to know and understand the love of Jesus
 - c. we are expected to learn to practice love - to love, not just to know it

B. John uses a startling illustration to get across his point

1. We are not to be like Cain who killed his brother
2. John's assessment of the problem is telling
 - a. Cain's deeds were evil (he was living like a child of the devil)
 - b. Abel's deeds were righteous (he was living like a child of God)
3. Cain's solution to his own problem was to destroy his brother
 - a. that's what unloving acts do, regardless of the specifics
 - 1) hypercriticism
 - 2) backbiting
 - 3) censure
 - 4) rumors
 - 5) attack
 - 6) envy
 - 7) opposition
 - 8) etc.
 - b. Christians must do better than this, for this is the way the world lives, not the way of Christ

C. It ought not surprise us that the world hates us, but it ought to surprise us when our brethren Hate us

II. LOVE IS PROOF OF PASSAGE FROM DEATH TO LIFE (3:14)

A. Obviously, John is talking about spiritual life

1. In sin, we are spiritually dead
2. In Christ, we move from spiritual death to spiritual life – that's what salvation is all about

B. Love is the proof of that transition

1. What are we to conclude about Christians who do not love others?
 - a. they mistreat, abuse, take advantage of, deceive, and use others for their own advantage
 - b. in both words and actions they demonstrate that they do not really care about others
 - c. even when they do seemingly good things, it's not because they're trying to do good for others, it's that they are trying to help themselves
 - d. sometimes their actions are directly and specifically harmful, derogatory, or destructive to others
2. I can tell you what John would conclude – those people abide in death, not life, and there is no proof that they've made any transition at all from death to life
3. Loving our brothers (and sisters) is an indispensable quality of the saved

III. PEOPLE WHO HATE ARE MURDERERS (3:15)

A. No doubt, John remembered the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount

1. Matthew 5:21-22 “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty *enough to go* into the fiery hell. NASB95
2. Jesus connected the underlying motivations and attitudes with the overt deed – to control the deed, control what lies beneath it

B. We need to know that hatred is an underlying motive and attitude of murder

1. Beyond that, hatred operates by means of certain tools
 - a. anger
 - b. bitterness
 - c. contempt
 - d. he is a man who has hard, negative, destructive emotions swirling in his heart
2. The difference between the hater and the murderer is merely a matter of degree, but the essential nature is the same

IV. HERE IS HOW WE CAN KNOW LOVE (3:16-17)

A. Through a quirk of verse organization, we have two passages that can be read together to give us A terrific insight into the love of God, the love of Jesus, and the love we ought to have for One another

1. John 3:16 -- “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. NASB95
2. 1 John 3:16 -- We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. NASB95
3. If you want to understand the nature of true love, look at what both the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, have done for us

B. We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren

1. John is not suggesting that we will be required to actually, physically, die for one another, though that certainly has been necessary in the past, and may again be necessary
2. He wants us to understand the principle of love that is demonstrated in Jesus Christ
 - a. he wants us to have a real concern and care for one another
 - b. he wants us to practice a love that gives, not one that takes
 - c. he wants us to learn how to sacrifice for the benefit of others
3. Illustration
A young man once told his fiancé: “I love you more than anything in the world; I would climb the highest mountain for you, I swim the deepest sea; I would give all my worldly treasures to win your hand in marriage.” She replied, “That sounds good, but could you come over Saturday and wash my car?” What she wanted was something a bit more within his reach.

4. I'm persuaded that's the difference between the love John is talking about and the love so often missing among Christians
 - a. we spend our time talking about theological truths and philosophical meanings
 - b. what is needed is for Christians to love with something more within our reach

V. LET'S STOP ALL THE NONSENSE (3:18)

A. Ronald Reagan used to quote an old Russian proverb: "trust but verify"

1. It goes hand in hand with another operating principle that basically says, "we will listen to your words, but we will watch your actions"
2. The truth is that words are cheap, while actions are the proof that we mean what we say

B. Little children, let us not love [merely] in theory or in speech but in deed and in truth - in practice and in sincerity" (The Amplified New Testament)

C. I think John is encouraging us to stop all the nonsense

1. It's nonsense to talk about love, to write about love, to philosophize about love, etc., if we never get around to acting lovingly
2. Love needs both truth and action to make it worthwhile

CONCLUSION

A. Don't miss the important communication of this section

1. It goes back to the difference between practicing sin and practicing righteousness
2. It is at the heart of identifying the children of God as opposed to identifying the children of the devil
3. It has everything to do with proving the transition we've made from death to life
4. It is the message we've heard from the beginning

B. Invitation