

1John 3:11-18 (READ)

Last week we considered the practical application of John's first test

It was the contrast between sin and righteousness

Today we are going to look at the contrast between love and hate

Which is the practical application of John's second test

Which we called the social test

Francis Schaeffer introduced his book The Mark of the Christian

With the following

Through the ages men have displayed many symbols to show that they are Christians. They have worn marks in their lapels, hung chains around their necks, even had special haircuts. However there is a universal mark that is to last through all the ages of the church, till Jesus comes back. What is this mark? The mark that Jesus gives to label a Christian, not just in one era or in one locality, but at all times and all places, until Jesus returns, is that the church of Jesus love one another.

There is no contrast more important for us

Than the contrast between the church and the world

John writes – the world hates Christians so we should love one another

Love is the mark of whose we are

The meaning of love has become so changed in the last 400 years

That everyone can claim to be a loving person

Dean Martin sang – Everybody loves somebody, sometime

But Mr. Martin was not singing about the kind of love John is writing about

The love John is writing about comes from God

On the one hand hate originates with the devil

And indicates the existence of a bond with him

Satan is a murderer a liar and a hater

In him there is no love – he is filled with all consuming selfishness

It expresses itself in envy and hatred and ends with murder

On the other hand real love originates with God

And indicates the existence of a bond with Him

Love expresses itself not in feelings but in sacrifice

And in practical demonstrations of concern for those in need

The origin and nature of hate and the origin and nature of love

Form the two main sections in this passage

Love contrasts those in God's kingdom to those in Satan's realm

And love has always been the mark of every true Christian

The rest of the NT consistently bears out this truth

John 17 – Jesus speaking – I pray that the love with which You loved Me may be in them – us

Gal 6 – The fruit of the Spirit is love

Rom 5 – The love of God has been poured out within our hearts, by the Holy Spirit

1Thes 4 – You yourselves are taught by God to love one another

1Pet 1 – Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart

You see God not only commands us to love

He also enables us to love one another

John writes – go back to the message you heard from the beginning

That message would have included the truth about man's sinful condition

The truth about Jesus Christ

The need for righteous living and the command to love one another

Don't be led astray – loving each other is an issue of first principles

One of the primary tasks we have been given

When you are confused spiritually – always go back to the basics

What men are like – who Jesus is – what He did

What that means

Don't get all caught up in the world and what it offers

For since you have been saved you are no longer one of them

And the world hates you

Jesus said it would – John 15 – I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

As the example of hatred John gives us Cain

Cain belonged to Satan and Abel belonged to God

And because Abel gave himself to God his brother hated him

Cain showed his spiritual lineage when he murdered his brother

He was of the evil one

Had Abel done something worthy of death – just the opposite

Now listen carefully

Cain hated his brother and murdered him because of his righteousness

The ultimate act of murder grew out of a heart attitude of hate and envy

What began as envy in the heart turned to hatred

And was brought to fruition by murder

God knows the human heart

Jesus said – You have heard it said, “You shall not commit murder, and whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court”. But I say to you that anyone angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says ‘You fool’, shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

The teachers of Israel had taken the Law to mean only external actions

But God has always said that the real issue of sin is one of the heart

In Israel physical obedience to the Law was enough

But not enough for God

The bible declares that every man’s way is right in his own eyes

We all have a reason for what we do

We can always justify our actions

Every man’s way is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart

Abraham Lincoln said – You can fool all of the people some of the time and you can fool some of the people all of the time.

That’s true - you can even fool yourself – but you will never fool God

God knows your heart He knows your motives

And God wants you to live with a clean heart and with pure motives

God didn’t create a set of robots unable to make spiritual decisions

He created us with free will

For God wants us to love and worship Him and get along together Because we desire to do it

God wants us to live together in peace not because of laws

But because we know that each one of us is His unique creation

So He created men with ability to choose love

And the ability to choose hatred

The terrible part is this –

Sin has severely damaged our capacity to love

And increased our ability to hate

Love is outward – it’s putting someone else’s needs first

And because of sin we are inherently selfish

Always looking for what is in it for us

In the end the cry of unredeemed mankind is – me first

Me first was Cain’s problem

He couldn’t stand to see Abel preferred over him

Men are as guilty before God for their heart attitudes
As much as they are for the actions that flow from heart attitudes
By God's definition – and His is the one that counts
Hatred and envy are as much murder as is the taking of a life
For from hatred and envy flow murder
John has chosen Cain as the example of hatred
Because Cain's life of selfishness and murder
Stand in contrast to Christ's loving sacrifice for others
Now listen - John then takes Cain's feelings toward Abel
And relates it to how the world feels about you
Do not be surprised that the world hates you
The devil is the prince of this world and he was the spiritual father of Cain
It is only natural for the spiritual descendents of Cain
To hate the spiritual descendents of Christ
So if you run into people who don't like you and you don't know why
It just may be because the spirit that is working in the sons of disobedience
Hates the Spirit that is at work in you
Just as Cain hated Abel

I was attending the annual meeting of the company I worked for. My boss, his assistant and the four branch managers all went to dinner in the same car. On the way to the restaurant one of the managers told the vice president that he had a problem. He had unknowingly hired a Christian and he was concerned that this was going to cause problem in his office. The vice president said that he should just keep an eye on this person and make sure he didn't cause any trouble, but at the first sign of trouble he needed to get rid of him. You could have cut the tension in the car with a knife. Everyone knew that the conversation was about me.

As a Christian I had been warned

Don't expect to get your satisfaction from the world
It isn't there – and the world just flat out doesn't like you

Matthew Henry – The great serpent himself reigns as the god of this world. Wonder not then that the serpentine world hates and hisses at you, who belong to that seed of the woman who bruised the serpent's head

How are we to handle the animosity the world has toward us
In opposition to the hatred of this world we are to display Christian love
Just as the presence of envy and hatred in a person's life
Indicates that the devil is the owner of a person and not God
Love and self-sacrifice are the earmarks of a person transformed by the Holy Spirit

When John says that “He who does not love abides in death”
He is reemphasizing that the Christian life is miraculous
Men and women are not neutral toward God
They are sinners – which means they are in rebellion
And they express that rebellion in everything they do
That changed for you when you became a Christian
For Christianity is not some creed you signed
Not a list of rules or an ethical pledge
The Christian life is a vital living relationship
Between ordinary men and Almighty God
It was planned by God before time began
Instigated by His will - made possible by the death of Jesus
And completed by an act of the Holy Spirit in your life
Every person who is saved has experienced the miracle of “new birth”
Don’t ever say that you haven’t experienced any miracles
You being a child of God is a miracle
And with the Holy Spirit now residing within you
Your entire life is miraculous – you have God residing in you
For the impartation of divine life
Is of necessity accompanied by characteristics of the One who gives it
Let me put it more simply
Because God indwells your life – you are more like God than you used to be
When the Holy Spirit invades your life
The major change in your behavior is righteousness
The major change in your character is love
The Holy Spirit is not about drawing attention to Himself
His purpose is to exalt Jesus Christ
And reproduce the character of Jesus within you – God is love
So the one who does not love has no assurance that he is in God’s family
And the one who visibly demonstrates love for others
Can be sure that they are born again
John’s use of the term “brother” is no accident of words
As I mentioned last week – there are two families – 2 kingdoms – 2 races
The family of God and the family of the devil – that’s it – just two

By calling us brothers he is emphasizing that we are all in God's family
And God is our Father
Christian love involves all of mankind
But the love of Christians is particularly strong for those in the family
Their eternal brothers and sisters
So as the Holy Spirit resides in you
Love for Jesus and love for the ones whom Jesus loves
Will begin to evidence itself in how you live
Three things will happen as you begin to love other Christians
Knowing that Christians are imperfect beings indwelt by God
And God is at work in them - just as He is at work in you -
You will not be so quick to criticize other Christians
Then you will want to get together with other Christians
You will want to go to church – attend home group
And generally do things with other believers
And when you see a brother or sister with a need you can meet
You will meet it

The great example of the Christian life is Jesus
The word John is using for love is “agape”
The strongest word for love in the Bible
Agape love is passionate self-sacrificing love
That is the love we are to have for each other
The supreme example of this love is the salvation sacrifice of Jesus
He willingly gave His life for men and women who despised Him
The love John is talking about cannot be understood apart from this event
Agape love cannot be known apart from the love of God towards men
And it is at the cross that the greatest of all love is demonstrated
Over and over again the NT links love
And particularly God's love with Jesus death
John 3 – God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son
Romans 5 – God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us
1 John 4- This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for sins

The death of Christ on a cross is the measure of God's love
And the primary means by which we became aware of it
You see – true love is always sacrificial – there is always a cost
Life is the most precious gift we have
Cain showed his contempt for life by killing righteous Abel
Jesus revealed His love by sacrificing His own life
For unrighteous men and women He has chosen to call “His family”

Finally this love of God in us is to be particularly expressed
By our loving each other
John does not hesitate to point out that Jesus sacrifice of love
Should lead us to loving sacrifice
John mentions sacrificing our lives for others
That probably is not going to happen in this country
But we can sacrifice our own interests for the needs of others
We can sacrifice our time our money our wants - for others needs
Taking the Gospel of Jesus around the world involves sacrifice
Some sacrifice their time and money their dreams of marriage and family
Some give up their lives - some just sacrifice their money
But the Gospel isn't proclaimed without sacrifice
Another area of sacrifice is in the home between husband and wife
Today's society glorifies self-satisfaction
If you are not completely satisfied and happy with your marriage – leave
After all it's about what marriage can do for you - isn't it
Yet almost by its very nature marriage involves sacrifice
In his book – I Loved A Girl Walter Trobisch included this story
A boy had written to a pastor that he had loved a girl
The pastor replied - You did not love that girl; you went to bed with her. These are two completely different things. You can say to the girl, “I love you”, but what you mean is, “I want something from you”, and I want it now. This is the opposite of love, for love wants to give. Love seeks to make the other one happy, and not himself.
Then it takes sacrifice to help others grow in Christ
It takes time – it takes energy – it takes love to help the weak become strong
I want to finish up in the Book of James
In Chapter 2 James writes about faith and works

But James gives us a perfect example

Of how your faith is displayed through works of love

If a brother or sister is without clothing, and is in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Be warm and be filled”, and yet you do not give them what is necessary for the body, what good is that?

It’s January and you just returned from prayer meeting

You got home just in time for NCIS your favorite program

And just as the plot takes a key turn your doorbell rings

Manomanashevits - who is that – you answer the door and it’s brother John from church. He tells you that the heat has been turned off in his house and his kids don’t have warm clothes. Is there anything you can do

You’re all prayed up so you know exactly what to do. You put your hand on his forehead and pray that God should supply all of his needs. As you close the door on him to get back to your program, you say to yourself

I knew there was a reason I attended prayer meeting tonight

You get back to your program and just as they are about to solve the case

The doorbell rings again

Can I have no peace – you answer it and it’s sister Sally from church

She says – I hate to trouble you but my kids are hungry and we have no food in the house

You reach out put your hand on her forehead and pray – peace be filled

As you close the door on sister Sally you think

God is really using me tonight – and heaven - weeps

Love for the body costs you

It may cost you your time or your comfort – it may cost you your money

But it always costs

It is not how much you like someone you go to church with that matters

It is how you meet their needs – physical needs and spiritual needs

Anyone can claim to be filled with love

And ready to lay down his life for others

What John wants us to think about is how is that played out in day to day life

How do we treat each other

How do we talk about each other

Are we spreading the Gospel – are we helping young Christians mature

Are we meeting each other’s needs

His final words certainly recall what James wrote

Little children let us not love with words, but in deeds and in truth

Jesus wants unity in His church – His body

When we love selflessly church unity is assured

We can be certain that we are part of the family of God

And we can also be certain that the Gospel will spread