

# Light & Love: 1 John

## *Love & Hatred*

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: 1 John 2:1-14

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Have you ever had a conversation with somebody who claimed to be something or believed something? But as you continued to talk and as you looked at their life, you began to realize that what they were saying and what their life showed were really two completely different things. Let me give you a few examples. When I started dating Carolyn, my wife, she said that she was a Notre Dame fan. Now, many of you know that I'm a Michigan fan. I had to get this in there somehow, by the way. So this is just how I'm getting it in there.

You know I'm a Michigan fan, and so I remember thinking to myself, "This isn't going to work. If she's really a Notre Dame fan, I mean, we just can't do this. This isn't going to flow." And so I tested her and I said, "Honey, are you really a Notre Dame fan?" She said, "Yes." I said, "Can you name five football players on the Notre Dame football team?" And when she couldn't, I knew that it was okay, that we were going to be okay. And it actually ended up working out because last Monday night she was rooting for the Wolverines with me. And so that is true love, all right?

And so it ended up working out. Let me share with you another example. You guys all know that I love woodworking. I talk about it often. I enjoy doing it. It's one of my hobbies. And so I'll talk with certain people in the congregation. They'll say, "Yeah, I love woodworking too." And so I immediately start asking them questions like, "What table saw do you have? Do you ever hand-cut dovetail joinery? Have you ever tried a CNC machine? Do you use hand planes? What's your favorite type of wood to work with?"

Do you think that the Festool Domino tool is actually worth the cost? And after they look at me the way you are looking at me now, I know that they don't really like woodworking because these are the types of conversations that those people that love woodworking have. Now, let me give you a serious example. At the same time, I know many people who say they are Christians, but after spending time with them, I really doubt whether they know what that means. I've played golf with people in the summer as you get paired with people.

And eventually, it comes out, "What do you do for a living?" I say, "Hey, I'm a pastor," or whatever else. But by that point, we're maybe on hole six or seven, and that person will say, "Yeah, I'm a Christian too. You know I go to church and I do all of this." But by the time we got to the second T, I had heard every swear word in the book, and you know we finished the round, and they decided to go to the clubhouse and have eight beers before they drive home. Now, I'm not telling you I hate this person. I still love this person. I enjoy the time that we got to spend together.

But I do have serious doubts that what they're saying about being a Christ follower is true because what they're saying, what comes out of their mouth, and how they're acting aren't lining up with being a follower of Jesus. You see, I can claim a lot of things. But if my actions say something otherwise, my words are empty. It's why we have phrases in our culture like words are cheap. It's easy for us to say something, but our true belief comes out in our actions.

I can say that I love to give to other people, but if I never give anything and I'm selfish and I hoard everything for myself, then my words really mean nothing. Another name for this is a liar. Now, sometimes, I don't believe that these people are actively trying to lie. I think that many times they have just deceived themselves into believing something that isn't true.

People have intentionally and unintentionally been deceiving others since the beginning of time. So today, as we continue in our series of 1 John, we are going to see that in the early church, John also had to deal with this confusing thing that was taking place where you had individuals that were saying one thing but doing another.

And because of that, in this early church at its very beginning, John had to address this because it was causing disunity and it was causing confusion. So in 1 John, he wants to address this, the confusion, the misunderstanding that was taking place inside the church and outside of the church. There were real questions that needed to be answered in the early church for those that were coming in. Questions like, "What does it mean to believe in Jesus?"

What are the core beliefs of our group of people? What are we going to say are the foundational truths to be a Christ follower?" And if I do believe these things to be true, what is my life supposed to look like? How am I supposed to act? How am I supposed to behave? How should I treat other people as a Christ follower? And how should I expect to be treated? One really important question that they all had to deal with there in the early church was this.

How do we know who is with us and who is not with us? Who can we trust? And who should we not trust? Just like today, there were individuals carrying around the title of Christian, but they were not living like it. Or even worse, they were teaching false truths, things that may have even been contrary to being a follower of Christ.

In a truly amazing way, John is going to help the church distinguish between true followers and troublemakers that worked 2,000 years ago, but yet still works today. That is amazing. Cultures have changed. Things have changed. But the fact that what John said 2,000 years ago is still good for us to be able to visualize and be able to see is somebody truly a Christ follower or not.

If you haven't already, you can open your Bibles with me to 1 John 2:1. It's near the end of the Bible, 1 John chapter 2, verse 1, and the words will be on the screen behind me. Last week, we finished chapter one. This week, we're only going to make it halfway through chapter two, and then we'll finish in two weeks because next week will be kind of our vision casting Sunday. And so let me pray and then we'll jump in. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your words.

Thank you for loving us where we're at. Thank you for speaking truth into our lives. My prayer for us today, for those that are here, for those that are joining us online, listening on the radio, God, I just ask that our hearts would be open to hear from you and that you would truly hold that mirror up in front of us so that when we look deep inside of ourselves, we would know what the truth is. What do we really believe to be true?

And if it's not what we thought that we would be willing and have the courage to take action, we ask this in Jesus' name, amen. 1 John 2:1, many times these smaller books in the New Testament, many that the apostle Paul wrote, are letters to other churches. But 1 John is a little different. It's written more like a sermon than it is a letter. And so think about that as we read this together.

1 John 2:1, John says, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous one." I want you to notice the tone that John is using as he is writing this sermon. He's writing it from the heart of a parent, a loving parent. You can tell that he wants what is best for this church. He wants them to thrive.

He wants them to be healthy. He wants them to grow. He cares for them. John takes responsibility for them just like a parent takes responsibility for their children. He wants them to be successful. He wants them to live life to the fullest. But even as he shares in this first verse, he says, "Listen, my goal in writing this," he said, is that you will not sin. But yet, if you do sin, know that you have an advocate. There's this tension that is taking place.

It's been going on since chapter one, this tension in our own lives where we recognize that we're all sinners. Every single one of us, we are all sinners. And so the first step of salvation was to come before a holy, loving Father and to confess our sins before Him. Then the goal after salvation, our desire, just like John's desire, is that you would go forward and sin no more. That's our goal.

No longer make mistakes. No longer sin. But the tension comes in and recognizing that's not attainable on this side of heaven as we live in our earthly flesh. But yet John says, "Don't worry. I don't want you to panic. Yes, there's attention going on. I want you to live a sinless life, but I know that you're going to struggle and it's okay. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, who will go before us." But because of our human nature and understanding our struggle, he's going to go on to help us recognize as followers of Jesus.

Don't take advantage of that advocate, Jesus. Don't continue to purposefully live a life of sin, believing it's okay. I have an advocate. I can do whatever I want. I can ask for forgiveness, and God's going to forgive me, and I can go on, and I'm going to say I love Jesus, but I'm going to continue to live my life of sin because I know that God will forgive me. And John is saying, "If you're doing that, you've kind of missed the boat. You've missed the point." Let me give you an example.

It'd be like me telling my kids, which I do, "I will always love you no matter what you do. It's a choice I'm going to make. I am going to love you." It would be like my kids saying, "Well, dad and mom are going to love me so we can go out and do whatever we want to whoever we want purposefully just because we know we can come back and mom and dad are going to say, "It's okay. I love you." So how is it again that Jesus has taken away our sin? John will make that clear here in verse two.

Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world. Jesus became the atoning sacrifice for us. He took our place on the cross. That's what it means. He became the Atonement so that we can come before a holy and righteous God, and before Him, we can be viewed as pure and holy ourselves. He paid the price, the debt.

That's what John says. Remember that. He paid for that. He goes on in verses 3 and 4. He says, "We know that we have come to know Him if we keep His commands. Whoever says, "I know Him, but does not do what He commands is a liar." And the truth is not in that person. How do we know if we are in Him?

How do we know if we have received Him, if we have accepted Him? How do we know who is with us? John says, "It is those who obey the commands of Jesus." So the next logical question I hope that you would ask because I ask as I'm reading this is, does that mean that if someone makes a mistake and they disobey one of Jesus' commands that he or she is lost forever? Are they not a true follower of Christ?

Fortunately, for you and for me, John says, "No, that's not the case." John already addressed this in verse two. That's why he wanted to make sure that we recognize how awesome this gift is that God has given us, that Jesus will be our advocate. But yet as a follower of Jesus, something is going to be different about me. Something is going to be different about my life. This person that is a Christ follower, when they make that mistake, when they disobey God, when they sin, they will repent.

For their disobedience, they will recognize, "I have sinned against a holy God. I'm sorry." They don't continue to purposefully live in sin because they don't want to hurt a God they love. So the opposite is true. The person who continues to live in disobedience to Jesus and yet still claims to know him, John says, is a liar. Now, don't be mad at me.

You can be mad at John, all right? If you claim to be a Christ follower, but intentionally and purposefully live in sin, John would say, those two things don't go together. He goes on in verse 5. "But if anyone obeys his word, then love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in Him.

Whoever claims to live in Him must live as Jesus did." Now John's going to get a little more specific. What does it mean to live like Jesus? What is different about those that truly know Him? John says that they will have a love for God and a love for others because this is how Jesus lived. His life was defined by love.

The apostle Paul tells us in Galatians that there are certain fruits of the Spirit. There are certain character traits that define who God is. He is the definition of these things. And so if we are a Christ follower, if we are in Jesus and He is in us, then these fruits of the Spirit should be visible. And if you grew up in church like I did, you learned the song, right?

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. I mixed up those two in there, but you know those are the fruits of the Spirit. Those are what define us as followers of Jesus. But I want you to notice in that list, you didn't see the word perfect, did you? I didn't see the word perfect, and I'm very grateful that that's not on the list because we will still make mistakes.

Instead, it's an attitude of change. I view the world differently because I now view it through the eyes and the lens of Christ. John goes on in verse 7, "Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command, but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message that you have heard. Yet," John says, "I am writing you a new command.

Its truth is seen in Him, in Jesus, and in you because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining." This seems a little confusing. John says, "Okay, I am not writing you a new command. It's an old one. Oh, by the way, it is a new command." But if you know the gospel of John in what he wrote earlier, this will make a little more sense because Jesus does the same thing.

John remembers the exact moment that he was able to understand what it meant to be a follower of Jesus Christ. What does it mean to be a follower? He remembers this exact moment. It's ingrained in his mind. This moment was the night before Jesus was crucified. He was sitting around the table with Jesus there and the other followers. They were in the upper room eating a meal together, celebrating the Passover.

And Jesus said to them, "A new command I give to you. Love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another. And by this, everyone will know you are my disciples if you love one another." This wasn't a new command, but yet Jesus calls it a new command because now we have witnessed it in the person of Jesus.

How do I know what it looks like to live like Jesus? It means to love others. One pastor has said that if we are to live like Christ, then we always should ask the question in every situation of life, what does love require of me?

Every situation, the argument that you get in with your spouse, as you're in that argument, if you want to live like Christ, the question should be, "What does love require of me in this moment?" When you're upset because someone has taken advantage of you in the business world or at your job, you should ask the question as a follower of Christ, "What does love require of me?" What is it that it is asking me to do? This is the simplest form of the law of God and the commands that He has given to us.

It can all be boiled down to this. What does love require? So he goes on in verse 9, "Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still actually in the darkness. Anyone who loves their brother and sister does actually live in the light and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness, they do not know where they are going because the darkness has blinded them.

Anyone who claims to know Jesus and yet doesn't live a life of love, John says, doesn't really know him because love leaves no room for hate. Living like Jesus requires us to push away the darkness with His light and to love like He loved. In other words, if you continue to live in hate even after claiming to know Jesus, it's like claiming to see the light while walking around in complete darkness.

This person is blinded, John says. There's almost a sense of compassion for this person. Continue to love them, but recognize where they are in their journey. Recognize that they're claiming to see the light, but they're walking in darkness. There should be compassion for that person. So what is the reason for John sharing this with the early church and with us? Is he confronting the people in the church? Are there individuals there that are claiming to be in the light but walking in the darkness?

Certainly, there are. But is it possible that there are those who are reading that letter 2,000 years ago and those that are hearing today that are going to feel a little insecure about their faith, thinking, "Man, am I really saved? Am I not saved?" I mean, I still make mistakes. So what does it really mean? Am I a follower of Jesus or not? John wants to reassure the early church and he wants to reassure you. He wants us to know there is victory in Jesus over sin. There is victory in Jesus over sin.

And so he's going to talk about that here in verses 12 through 14. "I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name." Let me reassure you, your sins have been forgiven. If you have called on Jesus, he is your advocate. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you actually have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. I write to you fathers because you know Him who is from the beginning.

I write to you, young men, because you are strong and the Word of God lives in you. Let me encourage you, and you have overcome the evil one. John wants to reassure them. He wants to say, "You got this. It's going to be okay. Keep fighting." He trusts in their salvation. Again, with a parental tone, he writes this letter, "Dear children, that term of endearment, don't stress, your sins have been forgiven. Keep loving others.

You know the Father. Live in His light. Fathers, you know Him who is from the beginning. You have seen the light. Young men continue to overcome evil. You are strong. The Word of God lives in you. The life, the light, the Holy Spirit. Don't be discouraged. Let me encourage you. You see, as we wonder whether we are a follower of Jesus or not, we should just ask the question, "What does love require in every situation?

Am I concerned about others or am I concerned about myself? This is what it means to be a follower. This is what it means to live in the light." Really, you are living different than everybody else in the world. You see, we are born into this world with selfish tendencies, with sin, concerned about ourselves. Life is all about me. It's all about me, me, me. But when you become a follower of Christ, when you love like Jesus loved, life becomes about others, becomes about you.

So I can ask this question, "What does love truly require of me in this moment?" It doesn't mean that I always get it right. I'm going to make mistakes still. That's why John wants to reassure us that Jesus has paid the price for our sin by becoming that sacrifice of atonement. But he wants you to hear the warning as well. If you are intentionally living a life of sin, believing that you can just ask for forgiveness later, you are actually living in the darkness.

I've talked with people before, and we talk about faith and about salvation, and I'll ask them what they believe, and they'll say, "Yeah, I believe in Jesus, and He died for my sins." And you know there's some times that I doubt that maybe that's not true. And so I just kind of go off and do my own thing, but I always come back and ask Jesus for forgiveness. I go do whatever I want, but I come back. John would say, "You're kind of missing it.

You're kind of playing the game." And so today, my prayer for us is that you would be able to look internally and answer the question only you can answer. Am I truly a follower of Jesus? Does that impact my heart, my life, how I view the world? Am I really concerned about other people? Am I living in the light or am I living in darkness? You see, knowledge of the light doesn't mean you're living in the light. It's a conscious choice that you and I make.

Can you say that your life is defined by love and by the other fruits of the Spirit? Would that be how other people define you? If so, you can rest assured today of your salvation. John wants you to be assured of that. God has paid the price with Jesus Christ and with His death on the cross. You can celebrate and you can be overjoyed today on the gift of salvation that is available to you. But if you look in that mirror of your life, you say, "Yeah, I go to church even when it's negative 27 degrees out.

I try to do the right things. I try to read my Bible and pray, but I just go off and live my life however I want." I think John wants to grab your attention and say, "It's more than that. It's an inward change that only God can do. Have you allowed him to do that? And if not, today can always be that day." You might say, "I've been playing the game, pastor.

I try to do all the right things when people are watching, but when I'm by myself, I just do whatever I want, knowing I can ask for forgiveness." Yes, there is forgiveness available, but being a follower of Christ means that I don't want to intentionally hurt him. I don't want to sin against him. As always, the altar is open. There'll be people here that can pray with you if you want. If you're watching online, you can do your business with God wherever you're at.

If you're listening on the radio, driving down the road. Don't play the game. Truly surrender yourself to God, allowing Him to save you and to cover your sin. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, sometimes the enemy deceives us in ways that are difficult to see.

I pray that no matter how hard it is, that every single one of us would take a moment right now, maybe later today, this week, we would say, "God, would you really show me my heart? Have I surrendered it to you or have I just been playing the game?" And Lord, I know it is your desire that every person would surrender, that they would experience the love and joy that comes through you.

So continue to work in our hearts and in our lives. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.