

“Love and Hate”

(1 John 3:11-24 ~ Part 1)

Introduction

➤ Scripture is always inerrant and relevant. With that said, today’s passage of Scripture could hardly be more relevant and immediately applicable for us in our day. Our culture/society is awash with hostility, animosity, and volatility. And Christians are certainly not immune to such behaviors and attitudes. We desperately need to hear and heed the message that comes to us from God’s Word today.

As we have seen throughout the book of “1 John”, the apostle John (writing words inspired by the Holy Spirit of God; 2Tim.3:16; 2Pet.1:21) utilized a number of stark contrasts:

- ♦ Truth vs. lies (1:6, 8; 2:21; 4:6)
- ♦ Righteousness vs. unrighteousness (2:29; 3:4, 7, 10)
- ♦ Obedience vs disobedience (2:4-6; 3:4-10; 5:2-3)
- ♦ Love of God vs. love of the world (2:15)
- ♦ Eternal life vs. eternal death (3:14-15; 5:11-12)
- ♦ Christ vs. antichrists/the antichrist (2:18, 22; 4:1-3)
- ♦ Children of God vs. children of the devil (3:1, 2, 10; 5:2, 18-19)
- ♦ Light vs. darkness (1:5-7; 2:8-10)
- ♦ Life vs. death (3:14; 5:16)

John continued these biblical/spiritual dichotomies in the passage we will be studying this morning (1Jn.3:11-24). Specifically, the contrasts of “Love vs. hate” or “Christ vs. Cain” (or “the way of Christ vs. “The way of Cain”). The word “love” appears seven times in these fourteen verses, with an additional use of “beloved” in verse twenty-one [“love” (*agapao*; vb., 5x; vs.11, 14^{2x}, 18, 23); “love” (*agape*; n., 2x; vs.16, 17); “Beloved” (*agapetos*; adj., vs.21)]. Christians living in the love of God is one of the major themes throughout the book of “1 John” (variant forms of the word love is used 52 times, in just five chapters/105 verses).

➤ The book of “1 John” was written to Christians – to all who professed to be a follower in Christ (see 2:12-14, 19; 3:1; 5:13). In doing so, throughout this book, the apostle John gave several tests to help Christians examine the veracity and maturity of their Christian faith (see 1Cor.11:28; 2Cor.13:5). One such “test” is the test of love. Those who truly love God, and His Son Jesus Christ, are compelled (by the Spirit of God and the Word of God) to love what God loves – especially those who also truly love God. For the love of God is not from this world, and the world is opposed to the love of God.

1 John 3:11-24 ~ “For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹²We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous. ¹³Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. ¹⁵Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? ¹⁸Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. ¹⁹By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; ²⁰for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. ²¹Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²²and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. ²³And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. ²⁴Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.”

➤ Biblical love is not merely a feeling, or even an emotion. It is a conscious decision to act in a way that truly benefits the recipient, by demonstrating the love of God. This love [*agapaō* (vb.), *agape* (n.)] is the highest and purest form of love. It is selfless, sacrificial, and sacred. It is a love that comes from God (1Jn.4:7-8, 16), and therefore a love that reflects the attributes and character of God.

In this passage of Scripture, we find several truths regarding the Christian's call to love as God loves.

I. The **Instruction** (vs.11-12)

➤ The command to “*love one another*”, in verse eleven, is stated as a reminder: “*For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning*” (vs.11). As we have seen before, the phrase “*from the beginning*” can be confusing (see 1Jn.1:1; 2:7, 13, 14, 24^{2x}, 3:8). Here, however, it is clear that the apostle is referring to the truth these believer originally “*heard*”, from the outset of their true conversion, that Christians “*should love one another*” (vs.11).

In other words, this is not a new teaching but an important reminder. This was not “news” to the original recipients of this book, and it is most likely not “news” to any of us either. Most people (even unbelievers) seem to be aware that Christians are called love one another. The difficulty is not in knowing (or understanding) this truth, but is obeying (or living) this truth.

➤ It is important to point out what may be obvious: this is a command from the Lord. It is not a suggestion from the Lord, and therefore not optional for Christians. This (subjunctive) verb – “*we should love*” (vs.11; *agapaō*) – indicates this is an action to be followed, not merely a feeling to be felt or an idea to be thought. As we will see, the command to love is active not passive. We are not necessarily commanded to feel love for one another, as much as we are commanded to be loving toward one another.

➤ In verses 11-12, this command is stated in the positive (what to do) and the negative (what not to do).

1 John 3:11-12 ~ “¹¹For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹²We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.”

A. What to do (vs.11)

➤ The point is terribly easy to understand, and yet often very difficult to apply. The point is this: those who truly love God, those who have been loved by God with a sovereign and salvific love, will love that which God loves and who God loves. A person cannot truly love God and hate what God loves. To put it more specifically, those who are truly God's children (Christians) will love all who are God's children (Christians). This is not only common sense, but also a command of God.

Matt 22:37-40 ~ “And [Jesus] said ... ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.’”

Therefore, the failure to love other Christians (as God loves them) is a sin, and – apart from confession and repentance – this sin can be evidence of a false profession of faith; proof that the professing Christian is actually unsaved.

➤ Notice that the command to “*love one another*” (vs.11) is a mutual love. The command is not to make others love us, or only to love those who love us, but that we (as Christians) would be actively loving each other [note: the Greek word (*allēlōn*), translated “one another”, can specifically refer to “another of the same kind”, whereas *heteros* can indicate “another of a different kind”].

This mutual love is to be seen in Christians, and prioritized among Christians (to “one another”). To be sure, Christians are commanded to love all people (Matt.22:39) and are even specifically commanded to love their enemies (Matt.5:44; Lk.6:27, 35). But there is a special, familial, love that Christians are to have toward one another. To be sure, some people – even some Christians – can be difficult to love. They serve as our “spiritual sandpaper”; helping to smooth out our rough edges, to humble us, to correct our imperfections, to strengthen our weaknesses, and to deepen our love and compassion for others. Christians are to especially love one another.

✓ **Illust:** “Paul seeks to be mutually encouraged by the Roman church (Rom.1:12). We are one body and individually members ‘of one another’ (12:5; Eph. 4:25). We should outdo ‘one another’ in showing honor (Rom.12:10), live in harmony ‘with one another’ (12:16; 15:5), not pass judgment ‘on one another’ (14:13), not provoke ‘one another,’ envy ‘one another’ (Gal.5:26), lie ‘to one another’ (Col.3:9), speak evil ‘of one another’ (Jas.4:11), or grumble ‘against one another’ (Jas. 5:9).

Rather, we should: build up ‘one another’ (Rom.14:19), welcome ‘one another’ (15:7), instruct ‘one another’ (15:14), have the same care ‘for one another’ (1Cor.12:25), serve ‘one another’ (Gal.5:13), bear ‘one another’s’ burdens (6:2; Col.3:13) in love (Eph.4:2) submit ‘to one another’ (5:21), in humility count ‘one another’ more significant than ourselves (Phil.2:3), encourage ‘one another’ (1Thess.4:18; 5:11), do good ‘to one another’ (1Thess.5:15), confess our sins to and pray ‘for one another (Jas.5:16), show hospitality ‘to one another’ (1Pet.4:9), and most important, love ‘one another’ (Rom.13:8; 1Thess.3:12; 4:18; 2Thess.1:3; 1Pet.1:22; 1Jn.3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2Jn.5).

As believers walk in the light of Christ, they have fellowship ‘with one another’ (1Jn.1:7). ‘Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other just as God in Christ forgave you’ (Eph.4:23; cf. Col.3:13). What a difference from our preconversion life when we hated ‘one another’ (Tit.3:3); now we consider how to stir up “one another” to love and do good works (Heb. 10:24)” (Mounce, W.D.;

Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words: “one another”).

➤ It is relatively easy for us, as Christians, to forget (or neglect) to love other Christians. Christians can be most critical, most demanding, and most judgmental of other Christians – after all, our expectations concerning the morality, integrity, and maturity of fellow believers is typically higher the same expectations of unbelievers.

However, our love for fellow believers ought to be greater and stronger than our love for unbelievers – for Christians uniquely share a love that comes from God through the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit. We find this truth expressed throughout Scripture:

John 13:34-35 ~ “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” [note: not “new” as in never taught before, but renewed in Christ and for His disciples (see Deut.6:5; Lev.19:18; Matt.5:43; 22:39)]

Rom 12:9-10 ~ “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.”

1 Peter 1:22 ~ “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart”

Gal 6:10 ~ “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

➤ We are commanded to love others regardless of whether or not they love us, or whether we ‘deem’ them lovable or unlovable. Our love needs to be pure in both our motive and expression of love.

1 John 3:11 ~ “For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.”

1 John 3:23 ~ “And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us.”

1 John 4:7 ~ “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.”

1 John 4:11 ~ “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

➤ Christians are to love one another as they have been loved by Christ. In the New Testament, this love (“agape”; *agape*) is known as the most sacred, most selfless, and most sacrificial love. It is the word used to describe the love shared between the Father and the Son (Jn.15:10; 17:26); the word used to describe God’s love for His children (Rom.5:8; 8:39); the word used for the Christian’s love for Christ/God (1Pet.1:8; Matt.22:37); the word used to describe the love Christians have for one another (Jn.13:35); the word used to describe the Christian’s love for his/her enemies; and the word used to describe the Father’s divine attribute of love (1Jn.4:8).

This love is not merely an emotion or a feeling. It is an action, an act of the will. It is not an option or suggestion for the Christian, it is a command to be obeyed. In fact, it is the fulfillment of the entire law of God.

John 15:12 ~ “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

Gal 5:14 ~ “For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” [Lev.19:18; cf. Rom.13:10]

B. What not to do (vs.12)

➤ Interestingly, and surprisingly, the apostle John contrasted the Christian who loves with that of Cain – the first murderer in human history – *“we should love one another. We should not be like Cain”* (vs.11-12). To put it bluntly, “We should love one another, not murder one another.”

Gen 4:1-12 ~ “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, ‘I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord.’² And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a worker of the ground.³ In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground,⁴ and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering,⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell.⁶ The Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen?’⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.’

⁸Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.⁹ Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ He said, ‘I do not know; am I my brother’s keeper?’¹⁰ And the Lord said, ‘What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.’¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.¹² When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.’”

➤ Cain is forever an illustration of hatred – an extreme example of failing to love his brother. Overcome by envy, anger, and hatred, Cain literally killed his own brother. *“We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous”* (vs.12). We dare not dismiss this as mere hyperbole. The illustration is graphic because the sin of hatred is so insidious. This physical act resulted from spiritual rebellion against God – the physical sin of murder arose from the spiritual sin of hatred (unrighteous anger). All visible/physical sin, stem from invisible/spiritual sin.

✓ **Illust:** “The verb in John’s phrase that Cain [“murdered”, “murder”] his brother is a form of *sphazō*, which is a vivid term that means to butcher or slaughter. It was used of animals killed in sacrifice (cf. Lev. 1:5, LXX) and implies a violent death (in the only other reference to killing prior to Cain’s

action, God put to death an animal and used parts of its skin to cover Adam and Eve [Gen. 3:21]). It is as if Cain, intensely resentful and jealous because his inferior sacrifice was rejected by God while Abel's was accepted, violently slit his brother's throat, thus defiantly making him his "replacement sacrifice" (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*: 1 John; 3:12, 14).

Heb 11:4 ~ "By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks." (see Matt.23:35)

Jude 11 ~ "Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion."

John 8:37, 44 ~ "I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. ... ⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

➤ This serves as a graphic illustration of what not to do. That is, do not give in to hatred as Cain did. For even without a murderous physical act, hatred is spiritually murderous – essentially killing brothers and sisters in Christ. A person is either living according to the way of Cain, or living according to the way of Christ. "In God's eyes, hatred is the moral equivalent of murder" (John MacArthur; *ibid*).

1 John 3:15 ~ "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."

II. The **Exhortation** (vs.13-18)

➤ Notice the sharp distinction between Christians and non-Christians: "*Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you*" (vs.13). In other words, while hatred is not a characteristic of a Christian it is certainly a characteristic of a non-Christians.

Titus 3:3 ~ "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another."

Col 1:21 ~ "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds"

➤ The point here is the sharp and blatant difference between Christians and non-Christians when it comes to (true/biblical) love.

John 13:35 ~ "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Gal 5:19-24 ~ "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

➤ Therefore, Christians ought not be "*surprised*" (vs.13; *thaumazō*, "to be filled with wonder") when they are hated by non-Christians. However, it ought to be surprising when Christians hate and especially surprising when Christians hate other Christians!

1 Peter 4:12-16 ~ "Beloved, do not be surprised [*xenizō*; lit. 'think it strange'] at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice insofar

as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name."

- As the world hates Christ, and in hating Christ they hate God as well (Jn.15:23), they will express that hatred in those who follow Christ and worship God. Therefore, it should not be surprising to Christians when they suffer opposition or persecution for Christ. Rather, it should be surprising to Christians when they do not (2Tim.3:12-13).
- There is to be a clear and tangible difference in how Christians live compared to those in the world. The world is characterized by hate, and Christians are characterized by love.

A. The hatred of the world (vs.13, 15)

- The phrase "*the world*" (*kosmos*; vs.13, used 23x in 1 John) refers not to the physical planet (earth) but to the devil's rule in and over all unbelievers and all that is ungodly. The world – all that is ungodly and unrighteous in this world – is contrary to God's will and subject to God just and eternal wrath. As believers, we are called to be in the world but not of the world.

John 15:19 ~ "If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

Eph 2:1-3 ~ "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."

Rom 12:2 ~ "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

1 John 2:15-16 ~ "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world – the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life – is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."

1 John 4:4-6 ~ "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God. ..."

1 John 5:19 ~ "We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one."

- This does not mean that every unbeliever is seething with anger, or brimming with murderous violence (although we can clearly see much volatility and violence, hatred and hostility, in the world!). However, it does mean that every unbeliever is devoid of God's saving and sanctifying love.

It is important to remember that all unbelievers are not as sinful as they could possibly be, but they are (as all Christians once were) totally sinful and utterly condemned. Consequently, as "*the whole world lies in the power of the evil one*" (1Jn.5:19), all unbelievers are True (biblical) love is only possessed by those who, by putting their faith in Christ Jesus, have received the Holy Spirit of God.

- The reason for this hatred from the world – that is, from unbelievers – is that they ultimately hate God and the things of God (Jn.3:19-21; Rom.1:30; 8:7; Jms.4:4). Even if non-Christians do not conspicuously hate Christians, we know that they fundamentally hate all that the Christian worships, believes, and does in their pursuit of knowing Christ and making Christ known. Christians will be hated by those who hate Jesus Christ; they will be rejected by those who reject Christ; they will be persecuted by those who would persecute Christ.

Matt 10:16-22 ~ “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. ²⁰For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ²¹Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, ²²and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.”

John 15:18-25 ~ “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. ²⁰Remember 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 also keep yours. ²¹But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. ²²If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. ²³Whoever hates me hates my Father also. ²⁴If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. ²⁵But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause.’”

John 17:14 ~ “I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”

- Consequently, spiritually speaking, *“Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him”* (vs.15). In trying to make his point, John again used absolute contrasts. This does not mean that every hateful word or act automatically/immediately condemns a person to hell, or that no one who commits murder will go to heaven. Rather, this means that a life that is characterized by hatred – unrepentant hateful attitudes and behaviors (especially unrepentant hatred toward other Christians) – is evidence of an unsaved life.

Conclusion

- As Christians, we are called to be like Christ and specifically to love like Christ. We must remember that no one – individually or collectively – has sinned against us as often and as much as we have sinned against God. Yet God, in His incredible mercy and amazing grace, has loved us with an everlasting love. Christians are called to love others as God has love them (Jn.13:15, 34; 15:12; cf. Eph.5:2; 1Jn.4:11; Rom.15:7). We therefore need to be willing to forgive and eager to seek forgiveness (Eph.4:32; Col.3:13).

Christians are called to showcase to the world God’s saving and sanctifying love. God has given us His love (1Jn.4:19), and commanded us to love one another. This (*agape*) love not only compels us, but also defines us (1Jn.4:7-8).

1 John 3:15 ~ “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”