

1 John

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1 John 3:11-18

Vs. 11

- John begins the letter with the words, "What was from the beginning, what we have heard..." He returns to drive home and expand the thought here. The message we have heard from the beginning is that we are to love one another. As Jesus is preaching that message, our sinful hearts ask for clarification. "Jesus, when you say 'one another' you do just mean my friends at church, don't ya Jesus?" And Jesus replies with this long rambling story about a man on a trip who gets robbed and beaten and left for dead in a ditch. The story goes on with how the good people did nothing to help the man, but then a man who seemed kind of sketchy comes and save the dying man's life and Jesus says we are to go and do the same as the one who actually DID something! In other words, when Jesus says we are to love one another, the kind of love He's talking about is *ACTIVE* not passive, a love that *DOES* something. And "one another" means "people", not just my friends at church, not just the people I like, but people, all people. It doesn't matter race. It doesn't matter class. It doesn't matter religion. It doesn't matter what a person's story is. Where is their need? What is the best way to love them? How do I best love them as Jesus loves me? How do I best show them the love of Jesus? This is THE defining characteristic is being Christian.

Vs. 12

- John wants to be clear. Yes, Cain and Abel were brothers, but we are not to love as Cain loved. Physical brothers may hate one another, may even kill one another, but brothers in Christ cannot be brothers in Christ if there is any hate. John asks why Cain would kill his brother and he says it is because

Cain's works were evil and his brother's works were righteous (again, it's about what you DO). Cain was "of the evil one", meaning that he belonged to Satan. Here we have the metaphor that John loves so well: the conflict between light and dark. Darkness hates the light, so the evil man will hate the righteous. Without ever saying a word, the righteous man is a living condemnation of the evil man, shining Christ's light on to the darkness. The righteous man never even needs to say anything. He is derided as a "Goody Two Shoes", dismissed as a naïve do-gooder who doesn't understand the way the world works. The evil person sees in the righteous what he should be, but because he will not change, hate is all that is left to him.

Vs. 13-15

- So we are not to be surprised when those who make up a lost, evil world hate us. Perhaps John is remembering being with Jesus in the Upper Room in John 15:18, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you." Or perhaps John was thinking of a day in Jerusalem earlier that week when Jesus was speaking to them about the future and He tells them that "you will be hated by all because of My name" (Luke 21:17).
- As we just simply go through our lives being Christian, *actively* loving others as Christ loves us and loves them, we are inviting the world's hatred. It has been said that those who love the world's outcasts are more hated than the outcasts themselves. In Luke 19:7, when Jesus says He is going to stay at the home of Zaccheus the tax collector, "they ALL began to grumble..."
- There are a great many Christians who worry and fret over whether they are truly saved. John says the answer is easy. The certainty of your salvation and eternal life is found in the love you express toward others. We know that we have passed out of the land of death and into the land of life because we love as Christ loves. The one who does not love is still in death.
- At the other end is the one who hates. Moreover, so we clearly understand the definition of hate in the Kingdom of God, the one who hates is in fact a murderer. Clearly here John is recalling the Sermon on the Mount. In

Matthew 5:21-22 Jesus makes the clear point that the one who fails to show love is a murderer bound for hell. What Christ needs us to understand is that murder is not just a physical action. When we tear people down, when we dehumanize them, we are killing them. Murdering 6 million Jewish men, women, and children becomes a much easier task when you have it in your heart and mind that you are not killing people but “vermin” and you have been convinced that you are doing the world a favor.

Vss. 16-18

- Finally, John wants to be clear on what love is. He’s already pointed out that love is *ACTIVE*, now he wants us to understand that this Jesus kind of love is *COSTLY*. “If you want a definition of the kind of love I’m talking about,” John is saying, “just look at the cross.” The kind of love we are called to live our lives by is no mere expression of superficial sentimentality, the life of Jesus does not allow us that escape. Rather it is living every day being ready to lay down your life for others simply because you love them as Christ loves them.
- John then goes on to give an example of what laying down your life every day means in practical terms. Echoing James 2:14-17, John asks how the love of God can abide in someone who has the world’s riches, yet purposefully turns a blind eye to those in need around them. Giving one’s money, time, energy, and resources are ways by which we lay down our lives for others. Perhaps that person whose heart is wracked in grief just needs someone to listen for 5 minutes, just needs someone to lay down their life for those 5 minutes. The person who closes his heart on those in need around him, needs to get on their face before a Holy God and repent and beg forgiveness and be truly saved.
- Talk is cheap. So is writing. So let us not try to love with words only. That is insufficient. Rather, let us love in deed, in action, and in truth. Anything short of an active, sacrificial, Jesus kind of love isn’t the love of someone who is truly saved.