

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Please turn your bibles with me to 1 John 3

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through this very short, personal, powerful and very practical letter that the Apostle John wrote to the believer –

About the reality of who God is and the reality of what is a Christian?

What is a Christian like???

How do you know that I am a Christian?

How do I know that you are a Christian?

How do I know that I am a Christian?

Walking around with a bible doesn't make me a Christian

Showing up to church doesn't make me a Christian

Listening to Christian radio doesn't make me a Christian

Standing in front of this podium doesn't make me a Christian.

So, John provides us with a series of test that will bring assurance of who we are in Christ.

And so in our text this morning –

John is going to provide a test of love

“Do we really love the Lord?”

Let's pray...

Before we look at our text in depth –

I want us to look back at verse 7 from last week – because it is tied to our text this morning.

[1Jo 3:7 NKJV] 7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

In context –

We need to understand that righteousness goes beyond what we believe or how we behave.

The righteous life is the result of salvation that comes from Christ.

By God's grace – the Christian (you and me) practice righteousness because we have been made righteous. (repeat)

In other words, righteousness is not something that we have to fabricate within ourselves in order to make God happy.

Righteousness is something that is inside of us –

We have the Helper, the Holy Spirit living inside of us –

Therefore, we practice righteousness

Now – with that in mind.

[1Jo 3:10-17 NKJV] 10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor [is] he who does not love his brother.

One of the things that we tend to do in life is group people in groups and label them.

We do it by race, nationality and age

Just looking at the people here, we have baby boomers, gen x, gen y's and millennials.

We have the group of people that think it is too cold in here and the people that think it is too hot in here.

The Apostle John puts all people in two categories or two groups.

The lost and the saved –

But he uses different labels.

He labels them as Children of God and children of the devil

There's no other category.

No one is “kinda’ saved.

I have this friend and he’s in this situation. What should I tell him?

Is he a believer?

Well, he’s kinda saved. // He’s not a Christian, but he’s not lost, exactly.”

if he’s not born again, not a believer & follower of Jesus, then lost IS exactly what he is

John is utterly clear throughout this letter; Either we are in sin and lost or in Christ & saved.

There is no “work in progress” category.

There is no middle ground

Everyone we meet is either on their way to Heaven, or Hell.

Jesus came so those on the way to Hell could switch their destiny to Heaven.

He & He alone is what makes that switch possible.

What John says here in verse 10 –

Is that – the children of God, prove they’re on the way toward Heaven, by demonstrating certain behavior.

They practice righteousness because they have been made righteous

The children of the devil won't practice righteousness because they haven't been made righteous and one of the ways that this is revealed is that they will not love God's children.

I had you make not of the word manifest – because it means to make visible / to reveal.

God's children do certain things

Works do not save – but the saved, work.

They practice righteousness – they do what is right

John is telling us that love reveals our true nature

The presence or the absence of love reveals whether we are children of God or children of the devil.

And as Children of God, we love what God loves and hate what God hates

John links the practice of righteousness with love

So we fail to practice righteousness –

- Every time we mistreat each other or abuse each other
- When we ignore each other
- Neglect each other

[Eph 4:32 NKJV] 32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Our nature reveals who our Father is

God is righteous – not unrighteous

God is holy – not unholy

God is love – not the absence of love

So the best indicator of what constitutes righteous behavior is how we treat one another.

Our love for the Lord will be expressed on how we treat one another and how we minister to one another.

11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,

John reminds the believer – that one of the first lessons that they learned when they came to faith in Jesus Christ was the priority of love.

[Jhn 13:34-35 NKJV] 34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

We are saved by love and for God’s love.

But the implication here – in context – goes beyond the gospel

I believe it goes all the way to the beginning of the revelation of God

God's revelation from the very beginning was a revelation of love

And we see that in the Garden of Eden – after the fall - as God would not allow man to remain in sin and rebellion.

And when we get to Genesis 22 – we find the first mention of love

And it is the love between a Father and a Son.

As God tells Abraham "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love,

You see church,

If we are Children of God –

We must understand that love is not an option – it is an obligation.

It is a command.

His presence in us is so powerful that we have to respond in love

But if we are children of the devil

There is an absence of love

We will not practice righteousness and -

We will hate each other and we will live as enemies of God.

And John provides an example for us.

12 not as Cain [who] was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

Cain didn't love his brother Abel; He killed him

And he killed him because while they were both sons of Adam, they were not both children of God.

Abel was a child of God, Cain was a child of the devil

You see, what John is doing here – he wants us to think.

He is giving us a quiz to see if we are grasping what he is writing.

Why did Cain kill Abel?

But with the quiz – comes the key

Cain killed Abel because Abel was doing the right thing while Cain wasn't.

Abel was coming before God on God's terms – practicing righteousness

Cain was coming before God on his own terms – he wanted to come before God, his way – he didn't want to do the right thing – he wanted to do what he wanted to do.

So Cain brought forth a loveless sacrifice

He starts his own religion.

Abel's offering was accepted by God / Cain's was rejected by God.

Here's the thing –

If Cain had been a child of God, when he realized that he was wrong for coming to God on his own terms, he would have confessed, repented and set out to make right.

He would have told Abel – “thanks bro – for setting me straight – I see I have to come to God on His term”

But Cain had no interest in making things right – his interest was doing what he wanted to do.

So he blamed his feeling of being wrong on Abel – Abel was the problem.

Solution – get rid of Abel.

And church, that's the template for relations between the children of God and the devil ever since.

The lost do what they want to do without regard for whether or not it's right.

When they realize they're wrong, instead of making it right, they get angry at whatever it is that reveals they're wrong.

Every single person has the choice to make –

We can come to God on His terms or on our own terms.

What John is saying here is that the make believer – can make it seem like he or she is a Christian

They are quite capable of worship, they are quite capable of making it seem like they are children of God

Cain killed Abel – not just because he was jealous of his brother – but because God accepted Abel and rejected his worship and rejected his worship.

You see, Cain's sin wasn't simply a sin against his brother – it was a sin against love.

Here is why –

Since we are talking about categories/groups

There are those that we are supposed to love and don't

There are those that we are supposed to love and do.

The real test of loving God is loving your brother – so Cain failed the test.

13 Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.

Once again, I must remind you that the world here is in reference to the world that stands in opposition to God.

They are they system of thought and belief and philosophy that stand in opposition to the revelation of God and the word of God and the gospel of God and who Jesus is.

[Jhn 15:18-19 NKJV] 18 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before [it hated] you. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Jesus reminds us that world followed Him and then turned on Him and then killed Him.

So as believers, we shouldn't be surprised, we shouldn't marvel – when the world cannot tolerate us.

I think the shocking part of this verse – especially in the times that we live in today – is how many in the church still look to the world for wisdom, or look to the world for understanding or look to the world for an example.

Instead of simply looking and abiding in Jesus and imitating Jesus

14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love [his] brother abides in death.

Turn to John 5

[Jhn 5:24 NKJV] 24 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

Jesus that this is what happens when we become a Christian –

We pass from death into life

And the way that this is manifested is by our love for one another

I had you make a note of the phrase – “we know”

John uses it 16 times in this short letter

It is a word that speaks of certainty.

This is how we can tell the real from the false – remember, John was dealing with a bunch of false teachings during this time.

Later on in our study in ch 5

[1Jo 5:13 NKJV] 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may [continue to] believe in the name of the Son of God.

If we are a Christian – since we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us - we love

The love we have for others ought to assure us that our salvation is real.

If we don't love others, then we've never "passed over" into life, and we remain in a state of spiritual "death".

So we ask ourselves -

Do we love our fellow Christians or do we despise them in our heart?

Do we think evil about them?

Do we constantly criticize them?

Do we constantly blame them, grumble about them, gossip?

John tells us – "that can't be our life"

Because love refuses to hate.

15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Many people feel that they are acceptable to God with a heart filled with hate and bitterness, animosity and grudges against their fellow Christians.

They can't imagine that God will refuse their worship –

They can't imagine that God will refuse their sacrifice, their friendship, their fellowship

But they, like Cain, come to God on their own terms and not God's terms.

“I am going to go to church with a heart filled with hate and anger and I am going to sing songs”

And John says – wait a minute, “This doesn’t make sense - Whoever hates his brother is a murderer”

[Mat 5:21-22 NKJV] 21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' 22 "But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' (big dummy) shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

Why would Jesus make this statement

Because anger and bitterness and animosity have the same substance in the heart of the person who is ready, willing and able to murder.

The only difference is that the murderer acts out his feelings – but in God’s eyes, they are equivalent.

Remember, God looks at the heart

We can try to hide our hearts from our loved ones and our neighbors and even those that we fellowship with.

But we cannot hide our hearts from God.

He knows the truth.

An old dead guy wrote the following

Love is the only security against hate. And as everyone who does not love is potentially a hater, so every hater is potentially a murderer.

A murderer is a hater who expresses his hatred in the most emphatic way.

A hater who does not murder abstains for various reasons from his extreme way of expressing his hate.

But the tempter of the two men is the same.

- It was his way of saying, the person who hates and the person who murders is motivated by the same devil.

And note the end of the verse –

no murderer has eternal life abiding in him

And the implication here is that neither does the person who hates his brother.

Can a murderer be saved?

The Apostle Paul was a murderer – he helped kill Christians.

David arranged to have Uriah killed

Moses killed the Egyptian and buried him.

Can a murderer become a friend of God?

The answer is yes –

But the question that John is asking is the following -

Can a person become a Christian and remain a murderer?

Remain a hater?

Those who possess eternal life are marked by love.

The alternative to love is hate; there's no middle ground

16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

These words really don't need any explanation.

They need obedience.

And sometimes I think we do a dis-service to a passage of God's Word by covering it with a lot of our own words.

I want to finish with this –

Some years ago a pastor stood up on a Sunday to deliver his sermon

He said, "Please turn to John 13:34-25"

Then read

"Jesus said, 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.'"

And he sat down and nothing happened for 10 minutes – the people were trying to figure out what was going on

He got up again and he read the same scripture again and went back to his seat

And he repeated it a third time – and it was during the third time that a lady sitting on one side of the room walked over to a lady she had a falling out with and asked for forgiveness and they prayed with each other.

They held hands, bowed their heads, and were reconciled before their Lord.

And then others saw what happened and it moved them to do the same

The next Sunday –

The pastor got up and recited the same verse –

However, this time – he could sense that there was hostility in the room

And after a few minutes, he got up and said the following –

, “Loving one another as Jesus commands us isn’t something we are to do 1 Sunday.”

“What I did last week wasn’t a clever trick; a pulpit stunt.”

“Jesus commands us to love one another & quite frankly, I don’t need to explain this or suggest ways to fulfill it.

WE JUST NEED TO DO THIS – Today, tomorrow, and the day after that till we all go home to heaven!”

Then he turned around, and went and sat back down.

Immediately people got up all over and began doing what they’d done the week before

When they came to church the next Sunday, they didn’t even wait to be told; as soon as they arrived they began praying for and speaking to each other and encouraging one another.

And loved ones - that is what we are called to do

Amen

Let’s pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

It seems like every study in 1 John deal with our love for God and our love for one another –

But we have to remember that before John became the Apostle of love – he was a hater – who wanted nothing more than fire to consume those that did not receive Jesus and the other disciples.

By Jesus' definition – he was a murderer.

So we see how his life was transformed by God's grace and love and He does the same with us.

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace!

