

1 John 3:11-18

## Distinguishing Godly Love

Rashaud Hudson

Introduction of Passage: As the Apostle John expounds on discerning between God's children and Satan's children (v.10), he expresses the importance of believers practicing a standard of love uninfluenced by sin. How we approach love is a byproduct of how we approach God.

### **1. 1 John 3:11-15 – The worldly person can't love how God commands believers to love, because their flesh won't let them.**

A. The world's attitude and actions are in opposition to the love required of the church. (1 John 3:11-13)

- “that we should love one another” (11b) – John reminded churches like Ephesus and others throughout Asia Minor of a familiar message and command from God of the importance of love among believers. (see 1 John 1:3, 2:9-10; Philippians 2:1-5; John 13:34-35; 1 Corinthians 13; Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 1:15-16; Contrast Hebrews 6:4-10 with Hebrews 10:24-25) Loving one another is refined in active fellowship, participation, and pursuit of righteous practice in the church.
- “not as Cain, who was of the evil one...” (12a) – Refer back to Genesis 3:15 in which many scholars have noted the enmity of offspring as symbolic of satanic forces against humanity and particularly those in fellowship with God, with the ultimate victory over Satan humanity would find in Christ (Romans 16:20). John's commentary on Cain is a revelation that his choice to allow his sin to influence him was a choice to be a child of the devil as expressed in 1 John 3:10, which is shown in his inevitable violent murder of his own brother due to a committed practice to oppose God (Genesis 4:3-8). Whether a sinner or a believer, pleasing ones own fleshly desires will inevitably strike those desiring to please The Lord (James 4:1-3; 1 John 2:19; Eph 5:2-5; Philippians 2:3) The spiritual Cain is the external sin that a church allows and enables, as well as the internal heart issue that a believer allows to fester.

- “do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.” (13) – This phrase echoes the very Words of Christ written in the apostle’s previous gospel letter John 15:18-20. (2 Tim 3:10-12). Seeking and attaining worldly love and acceptance may be indication of our own abandonment of God and other believers (James 4:4), as well neglect to evangelize (1 Corinthians 15:33-34), even to our own families (Matthews 12:49-50; 1 John 3:10) The same way Cain used God’s grace as only a means to pursue and build community and civilization apart from God, is the same pattern of the world today, and the same temptation for all believers that hinders spiritually growing in love.

B. God separates Himself from those who refuse His love. (1 John 3:14-15)

- “We know....because...” (14) – Cause and Effect: Our commitment to practice loving one another causes us to have assurance of our salvation and growth, because God is life (John 14:6; John 15:4; Galatians 5:22). When challenges come, the ability to continue loving one another is indication of an active and growing relationship with God (2 Peter 1:7-9), otherwise one who is okay with discontinuing relationships and commitments within the church community is choosing sin and achieving the enemies desire (John 10:10).
- “no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (15b) – The neglect to love other believers could be indication that the person is not a believer in the first place and they are dead in sin (Eph 2:1-3, 4:18-20, Matthew 5:21-22), or a believer who has become apostate in refusing to love other believers, in which God withdraws His spiritual blessing from their life due to their sinfulness (Matthew 5:23-24; 1 Corinthians 11:17-22,27-32, Matthew 5:13, Hebrews 10:29-31). It is also important to note that Christ will even remove the lampstand from a whole assembly if he doesn’t see sincere practice of love (compare Ephesians 1:15-16 to Revelation 2:4-5)

## **2. 1 John 3:16-18 – A godly person can’t love outside of Christ’s example, because His Spirit won’t let them.**

A. Our attitude towards loving each other is our responsive recognition of God’s attitude toward loving us. (1 John 3:16)

- “He laid down His life for us...we ought to...” (16) God causes our attitudes toward each other to be loving, not based on each other, but His love toward us (John 15:12-14, John 3:16). John and the other apostles most certainly experienced the physical extremes of laying down their lives for the continual spread of the gospel and building up of those in the churches (Compare Matthew 20:22-23 to Acts 12:1-2, Revelation 1:9) Figuratively and Literally, today’s believer should not allow suffering, sacrifice, and vulnerability to be an excuse to loving other believers.
- B. We are spiritually convicted to take practical actions that align with Christ according to His Word. (1 John 3:17-18)
- “how does the love of God abide in Him?” (17) – in the scenario described, a believer has “bios,” a Greek word referring to their ownership or capability to give someone what they need for life. In some cases the word can include pleasantries or excess. Historically, many churches like Ephesus consisted of believers who left their livelihoods attached to idols in their repentance and salvation (Acts 19:-20, 26-27). It is possible that the 1<sup>st</sup> century churches begin to struggle in sharing and meeting each others need due to heart issues that clouded their judgement (1 John 2:15; Jeremiah 17:9-10). It is important that we actively seek solitude in God so we actively engage with the convictions and unction of His Spirit that indwells us (1 John 3:19, 23-24).
  - “Little Children...let us not love in word and tongue..” (18) – Once again the Apostle John uses “little children” as an admonishment to the developing believer (see verse 7). In this instance, a similar issue highlighted in James 2:15-16 is discouraged. True commitment from believers to love one another means practical acts of betterment to ones life (deed) that align with God’s Word (truth, John 17:17) and mirror Christ’s examples (truth, John 14:6).

Conclusion of Passage: Godly love is a byproduct of our gratefulness in our understanding of His grace that causes us to actively seek the betterment of one another. Love is an attitude that becomes an action.