

THE SERMON NOTEBOOK

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If Not Love

First John 3:12-15

by

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SUBJECT: CONTRASTING LOVE AND HATE

TITLE: IF NOT LOVE

TEXT: 1 JOHN 3:12-15

INTRODUCTION. In our last message in this series we took an in depth look at two specific kinds of love, *agapao* and *phileo*. We discovered that while we may possess both kinds of love for an individual, we may hold one kind of love for a person and then see that grow into the other. If you are a born-again Christian, filled with the Holy Spirit, you will seek to be obedient to the God the Father. You are conscious of His love for you, the highest motivation for loving Him and for loving others. Obedience to God requires you to love one another - and to love those who are not believers; and believe me, I understand that this is not always easy. In fact, in the flesh it is impossible. But we can - and must - love them. But how?

Failure to understand the kind of love God commands may lead to guilt and frustration. The Bible does not say that you are going to have a warm fuzzy feeling for everyone you see. In fact, the Bible clearly warns you to stay away from some people: there are some you must walk away from, and others you had better run away from! How can I love people I must avoid? You can love them with a mental attitude love, pray for them with an understanding that God loves them, Jesus died for them, and you may be the very one He will use to bring them to faith in Him. There are some very godly people in most of our churches who were at one time not very pleasant people. Hey, you may be one of them!

When I first read in the Jackson Clarion Ledger about a brutal murder - in fact, when I read about two very brutal murders - I wanted to see the murderers pay the full price under the law for their crimes. Hanging was too good for them! For that matter, so was the gas chamber at Parchman. The first man had permitted a young pregnant girl to move into his motel room while he was in Jackson, working for the Mississippi State Fair. It was not his baby, but he offered to provide for her. He assured her he could handle it. However, in a drunken rage he beat her and strangled her to death. When I visited him in the Hinds County jail I did not know what to expect. I detested what this man had done, but I knew I had an opportunity to witness to Tommy and I wanted to take advantage of that opportunity. Little did I realize I would see Tommy become my brother in the Lord. I had a serious talk with him that day and received a letter from him during the following week, telling me he was seeking God. He was saved on the next visit, and I found myself loving this man as a brother in the Lord. I had this *agape* kind of love for him, and I was convinced that, given

time, Tommy and I might have become good friends (I was beginning to form a *phileo* type of love for him). I saw him a number of times, including a final visit at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman when Tommy expressed a desire to serve the Lord.

The second man had married a woman, taken out a ten thousand dollar life insurance on her, and two weeks later he murdered her. This was a brutal, cold-blooded, calculated, premeditated murder, and you cannot get much worse than that. If I may Aflash@ forward for a moment, I will never forget the man who walked up to me after I had preached at camp 4 at Parchman. He was wearing a warm, appreciative smile and while most of the prisoners spoke to me, I could tell that this man was a little different. He stopped right in front of me and asked, AWere you in Jackson last May?@ I thought a second and then acknowledged that I was. He asked, ADid you come to the Hinds County Jail?@ When I told him I had led a mission trip to the jail every Thursday, he smiled and held up New Testament, showing me the note I had written in the front before giving it to him in Jackson. He said, AI could not see you when we talked then but I remember your voice.@

I was permitted to talk with Tommy with two sets of bars between us, but when I witnessed to Frank I had to put my eye up to a heavy mesh over a window and speak to him. I could see him but he could not see me. I was only a voice to him. I deeply loved those two men in the Lord, men whose behavior I hated, men I might have hated had it not been for the love of God. Not only did I have an *agape* type of love for them, I could sense a growing *phileo* type love would have been possible if we had had an opportunity to spend more time together.

Let me stress here that I did not want to see those men freed until they had paid their debt to society and an official board determined that they should be paroled. They still had a debt to pay to society, but there was another kind of debt they could not pay, a debt Jesus paid for them. They received a judicial pardon from the Judge of eternity=s court.

In 1 John 3:11, we read, AFor this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that **we should love one another**.@ Now, John will paint for us a startling contrast between love and hate. If you are willing to look closely at both love and hate, you will have an opportunity to have your faith in Jesus Christ affirmed, and if it is not affirmed you will have an opportunity to repent. And I am absolutely convinced that there is no failure for which repentance is needed more than in the sin of not loving one another as we should.

I. THE OPPOSITE OF LOVE IS HATE, 3:12-13.

ANot as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you.@

A. Christians Are Commanded to Love One Another, 3:11.

B. Cain Is Given as an Example of One Who Hated.

1. Eve might well have assumed at first that Cain was the promised Seed.
2. Instead, Cain was of the evil one.
3. AWas@ implies a position with the evil one.
4. >Was@ implies an ongoing relationship.
5. Cain=s behavior was related to his relationship with the evil one.
6. Cain=s brutal act was not a simple impulse.
7. He wanted Abel dead.
8. Cain hated Abel because he was evil.
9. Hate and evil feed on each other.

C. Cain Slew His Brother.

1. This was the first murder in history.
2. Cain did not slay one who was a threat to him.
3. He slew the one he should have loved.

D. The Reasons for Cain=s Murder of Abel Are Basic and Timeless.

1. ABecause@ Cain=s deeds were evil, he hated his brother.
 - a. Cain=s deeds were apparently continuously evil.
 - b. We are not talking about one simple act here.
 - c. This was not justifiable homicide.
 - d. This was not a sudden impulse.
 - e. This was premeditated murder.
 - f. The murder was incubated and hatched out in heart filled with hate.
2. ABecause@ Abel=s deeds were righteous, he was hated by his brother.
 - a. Cain hated Abel because he was of the evil one.
 - b. The Aevil one@ hates righteousness.

- c. The righteousness of Abel fed a seething hatred in Cain=s heart.
- 3. We might infer that Cain was continuously evil.
- 4. We might also infer that Abel was continuously righteous.
- 5. ARighteous@ implies more than human good.
- 6. ARighteous@ implies a relationship with God.
- 7. ARighteous@ reveals the character and nature of God in one=s life.
- 8. There is little wonder that Satan hated Abel.
- 9. If Satan hated Abel, it is to be expected that Cain would hate him.

E. Now Contrast This With Some Things God Hates, Pro. 6:16-19.

*AThere are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And **hands that shed innocent blood**, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, A false witness who utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.@*

F. Cain=s Overt Act Followed Mental Attitude Sins.

- 1. Murder follows hate, as hate follows envy, jealousy, or covetousness.
- 2. Jesus amplifies this in the Sermon on the Mount.

*AYou have heard that the ancients were told, **YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER** and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' **But I say to you** that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell@ (Matt. 5:21-22).*

G. As Cain Hated Abe, the World Will Hate You, 3:12.

- 1. The Abecause@ of verse 12 still applies.
- 2. The world does hate the righteous.
 - a. This explains the intensity of the attacks on Christians.

- b. This fuels the de-Christianization of America.
- c. There are many examples:

ACLU, Islam, Communism, liberal entertainers, politicians, courts,
and educators.

- 3. AIf@ is a condition of the first class, meaning the world will hate you.

This is being spelled out on television every day and every night as we watch the news of the war in Iraq. First, there is the hatred of so many Islamic people for you because you are an American and because America has supported Israel. Second, the current Iraqi regime (and those friendly to it) hate you because they identify you as a Christian. One Iraqi website proclaims George Bush to be the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The streamer running across the screen reads GEORGE BUSH IS JESUS CHRIST (the one they hate with a passion we can hardly imagine). Radical Islamic leaders look on Americans as Christian crusaders. They have kept their hatred alive by watering it, feeding it, and brooding over it for centuries.

However, they are not the only ones who hate Christians. When Franklin Graham appeared on Hannity and Combs recently, he appealed to people to pray for President Bush. He was followed by a city councilman from New York and former senator Gary Hart who were passionately upset with Franklin Graham for asking prayer for President Bush and for proclaiming that Christians should seek to help liberate the oppressed. Believe me, both Jesus Christ and committed Christians are hated in the world in which we live.

If you do not experience any hatred from the world, either you are naive, you have removed yourself from the world, or the world does not see enough of Christ in you to concern itself. If Christ is manifested in your life, the evil one will see to it that you are hated by the world, just as you are hated by the evil one.

- 4. Hate characterizes the world, not the Christian.

II. LOVE OF THE ABRETHREN@ IS A PROOF OF SALVATION, 3:14-15.

AWe know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.@

- A. God Wants You to Know You Are His Child, 14a.

- 1. AWe Know@ this because we have taken in sound doctrine.

- a. The word means to perceive.
 - b. It means to appreciate.
 - c. Assurance is not based on what you feel in your heart.
 - d. Assurance of salvation is based in the promise of God.
 - d. It is something you can, and must know.
- 2. This is another of the proofs of salvation given in this epistle.
 - 3. What we know is that Awe have passed out of death into life@.
 - 4. Anyone who needs assurance of salvation can start right here.
- B. We Know ABecause We Love the Brethren,@ 14b.

- 1. This is the agape= kind of love.
- 2. Agape= is a mental attitude kind of love.
 - a. I know God loves me.
 - b. I know He loves the Abrethren@.
 - c. I know He has commanded me to love the Abrethren@.
 - d. I know He enables me to love them.
 - e. I desire and seek the highest good for others.
 - f. I do this even if they do not seem to reciprocate.
 - g. I do this for people who are unpleasant.

I do this for people I don=t even like! I know this is dangerous because someone may misinterpret it. However, it is an honest confession. I take no pleasure in confessing that there are people I do not like, but to deny it would be a lie. There are people God expects me to love, even if I do not like them - and I am not just talking about not liking their ways, I don=t like them. These are people who are obnoxious, offensive, arrogant, and in some cases dangerous. There are people out there who would destroy your child or grandchild for no better reason than their hatred for righteousness and their love for the evil one. Got tells us to avoid them. Yet, if there is an opportunity to witness to them we must be readily and we must be willing.

You and I do not know all the circumstances, and we may miss the fact that even a vulgar, profane, arrogant thug may be crying out inwardly for help. It is not enough to say, AI cannot love everyone, but Christ in me can; all I have to do is to let Christ in me love them.@ God does not have to command Jesus to love them, He has already died for them. He commands me to love them, and I must do it.

3. This kind of love is not possible for those who have not passed from death into life.
4. Your feelings are subject to sudden changes.
5. Mood changes offer no assurance that we have eternal life.
6. Because you have taken in sound doctrine, you have assurance of salvation.

C. By Contrast, AHe Who Does not Love Abides in Death@, 14c.

1. Those who love have passed out of death into life.
2. Those who do not practice this kind of love still reside in death.
3. This is not a Will Rodgers= kind of general love for mankind.
4. Agape= loves without seeking anything in return.

Perhaps you have heard someone say, AI don=t mind helping people if they just show a little appreciation@. Human love often revels in human good, and that is much better than human evil. The love the world knows is often rewarded with plaques, testimonials, and awards. *Agape* type love does not seek rewards, it does not seek recognition, and it does not demand appreciation. In Jesus Christ, you love as He loves. You love the Abrethren@, and you also love others. Your highest motivation is God=s love for you. The next highest motivation is your love for Him. Your next motivation is your knowledge of what God expects of you. You are not motivated by what you think God will do for you, or by what you think others will do for you. Your neighbor=s need becomes your opportunity. Awareness that you are doing this in obedience to the command of your Lord provides assurance that you have passed from death into life.

ILLUSTRATION: George was the chaplain=s aid at Parchman many years ago. He was also a prisoner. I often visited with George while waiting for Chaplain Roscoe Hicks to show up (usually at 8:00 A.M.) and tell me where he wanted me to preach that Sunday morning. After some time, he told me to just go to any camp I chose and tell them he had sent me. My first blessing of the day, however, began with my visit with George. George was from some place in Oklahoma where his grandfather was Asuperintendent@ of Sunday School for fifty years. He was serving time for breaking into a business in Jackson, Mississippi. The business belonged to the husband of the WMU President for the Mississippi Baptist Convention, Mrs. Edwina Robinson (as I recall). After George was arrested, the Robinsons got in touch with him and assured him of their concern for him. Through their ministry George

returned to the Lord. They supported him through his trial and stayed in touch with him during his incarceration in the Hinds County jail and at Parchman. As soon as he was eligible, they worked to get him out. George needed a job, and guess where he got one? Right! George was counting the days until he would get out and go to work in the store he had robbed (or burglarized, which ever it was). I thank the Lord that the Robinsons did not hate George for what he had done to them. I also appreciate fact that they did not wait for some emotion to overcome them. They saw a man in need and moved to meet that need. They not only gave him a job, the first gave themselves.

D. Everyone Who Hates His Brother Is a Murderer, 3:15a.

1. That is strong language.

I will never forget listening to R. G. Lee tell about a man he had been asked to visit. He went to his office and asked the information girl if he might speak with him. As she tried to think of what to say she was fumbling her information cards. Just then her boss stepped out of his office, and seeing Dr. Lee, he demanded, "Well, what do you want?"

"I'm a Baptist preacher and I want to talk with you about the Lord," he replied.

"You preachers are all alike; cut off your pay and you would quit preaching today!"

"That's a lie!," challenged the man so often called the prince of preachers.

After recovering from the shock the business man took his number and told him he would call if he ever wanted to talk with him. Weeks later, Dr. Lee received the call and drove to the man's house, a mansion in that day. His family was gone and he was depressed. He confessed, "I have done everything! Everything but murder, that is."

Dr. Lee said, "You have done that, too."

"What?"

"You have done that, too."

"What are you talking about?"

"Your sins put Jesus Christ on the cross. You and I are both guilty of the death of Jesus Christ."

This man was saved, and what got his attention was the charge that he was a murderer.

2. If you hate your brother the seed of murder is alive in your heart.

- a. Hates kills with the mind.
- b. Hate is the seed, murder the harvest.
- c. When you hate someone he is already dead in your heart.

E. AYou Know That no Murderer Has Eternal Life Abiding in Him,@ 3:15b.

1. Hate is the culmination of mental attitude sins.
2. Those sins include envy, jealousy, and envy.
3. There is no such thing as general hatred, it has an object.
4. There is no such thing as instant hatred.
5. Hate is outgrowth of a festering cancer of feelings and attitudes of the heart.

F. Murder Is the Extreme Opposite of Love.

1. Love is the opposite of lust.
2. Love is the opposite of envy.
3. Love is the opposite of covetousness.
4. Love is the opposite of popularity (you are salt, not sugar!).
5. Love is the opposite of just Abeing religious.@
6. A religious person may do good through selfish desire for rewards.

G. Love for the Brethren Is a Mature Way of Living.

1. To know this is to understand the Christian life.
2. To experience this is to have assurance that you have passed from death into life.

CONCLUSION. Love for the brethren is one of the most glorious fruits that grow in the tree of Christian maturity. You know you have passed from death into life if you love the brethren. The more you grow in your understanding of all this the more you will appreciate this great doctrine and the more you will be blessed by it. We live in a day when people attend classes and conferences on about everything you can mention. They search the Internet looking for help with anything you can imagine. Why not go to the Word of God - and to the God of the Word - and seek help in loving one another. Make that commitment and continually meditate on the principle of loving one another. Ask the Lord to help you. Above all, do not delay, and do not assume that this is something that just happens.

INVITATION.