

Discerning the True Nature of a Child of God – Part II

Evidenced by Love

(I John 3:10-24)

Introduction:

1. If you read much about the early church in the first few centuries (A.D. 100-200), you will discover from the writings of Ignatius, Polycarp and others; that the apostle John totally embraced the idea and principle that Christians ought to love one another.
 - An early quote (a favorite of mine) that you will find in some early church writings, pretty much sums up John's passion for Christian love as he is often noted for saying; "Little children love one another" and when questioned by his disciple as to why he would so often say those words his reply was; "It is the Lord's command, and if this alone be done, it is enough!"
 - We (the church at large) would do well to focus on loving others more than ourselves and perhaps find that we have more in common than we think and less that seems to divide us.
2. Where did John learn about love?
 - "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him, shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16)
 - "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35)
 - He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me, and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father....." (John 14:21)

3. As children of God, our nature is to love one another (I John 3:11), and as a collective body of believers (the church), this love for one another is an identifiable mark that we follow Christ. (John 13:35, I John 4:7, 11)
4. John also describes love this way; “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (I John 3:16)
5. In our day and age, if you asked people what love means; what sort of answers would you probably get?
6. John, facing the challenge from false teachers (“antichrists”), needed to address the issue of “**genuine**” love. In this portion of his letter, he will define what love is:
 - By first using an Old Testament example of the story of Cain and Abel, showing that *those who accept God’s love (such as Abel) will love Him in return by practicing righteousness.* In contrast, those who reject God’s love (such as Cain) will naturally follow Satan who is the author of sin and rebellion. **Those who follow Satan will practice unrighteousness (i.e. deceit, hatred, and murder), and this continued rejection of God’s love will lead a person to destruction.**
 - John will then describe what genuine love is by using Christ as our example; (“We know love by this, that He laid down his life for us” - I John 3:16), and how that translates into our everyday lives. His (Jesus Christ) life, models what we should do through personal sacrifice and service to others. Notice what John says; “And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and in truth” (I John 3:16-18).
 - John’s final thoughts in this chapter reveal the blessings and assurance that come from following and obeying God and by us demonstrating genuine love; “The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (I John 3:24)

Love That Destroys (I John 3:10-15)

1. The qualities and characteristics of love that we should avoid are the byproducts of **false love** resulting from an allegiance to Satan (I John 3:8-10):
 - A love of _____ and a rejection of _____
 - A love of _____ and a hatred for what is _____
 - A love for _____ and an unwillingness to accept God's _____
2. These are the characteristics and qualities of Satan himself and it is why he is headed for destruction and those who follow him will reap the same result. (I John 3:8-10)
 - One of the best examples of what "**false love**" and an allegiance to Satan looks like is found in the dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees in John 8:
 - 1) Notice the **rejection of Jesus** by the Pharisees, ("Then Jesus spoke to them again saying, I am the Light of the world, he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life. **So the Pharisees said to Him, You are testifying about Yourself, Your testimony is not true**" – John 8:12-13). They evidenced their false love and allegiance to Satan by placing their trust in _____ (their own way of salvation), and _____ God's plan of salvation.
 - 2) Notice the **influence of evil** that Satan has on those who follow him and reject God's plan of salvation. Jesus says to the Pharisees; "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is **you are seeking to kill me, a man who has told you the truth....you are doing the deeds of your father**" (John 8:39-41). The Pharisees evidenced their false love and allegiance to Satan by pursuing _____ and _____ that which is good. **They wanted to kill** Jesus (the One who is Truth), instead of embracing Him as Savior.
 - 3) Notice their unwillingness to accept God's _____ and their willing pursuit of _____; "If God were your Father you would love Me....you are of your father the Devil and you want to do the desires of your father" (Jn. 8:44)
 - Satan is the author of _____, promoter of _____ love and headed for _____

3. John uses the story of Cain to help solidify his point that **false love (a love for that which is evil, rebellious, and sinful) leads to destruction**, whereas **genuine love is a mark of a follower of Christ** (I Jn. 3:12-15)

- A little background on Cain and Abel;

1) They both were born outside of Eden and born into sin (they were born with a sinful nature just as we are)

2) Cain was the first born son of Adam and Eve and he worked the soil (tiller of the ground), which some commentators claim put him in line to follow the results of the curse God placed on Adam. Perhaps in some way a “unique” analogy to the judgment placed on Adam and Eve.

3) Abel was the second born son of Adam and Eve and he was a keeper of the flocks which some commentators claim put him in line to follow the intended purpose of man which was to have dominion over the animal kingdom. Perhaps in some way a “unique” analogy as to how things were intended to be had Adam and Eve not sinned.

- Cain had a problem with the fact that the Lord did not accept his offering which resulted in a course of action that was contrary to a “righteous life” (Genesis 4):

1) Cain showed his selfish behavior by _____ against God’s instructions

2) Cain showed his allegiance to evil by _____ God’s plan of redemption

3) Cain’s pursuit of unrighteousness was _____ through his outward actions of hatred and murder

4. The clear conclusion that John is driving his readers toward is that resentment, jealousy and hatred are not qualities and characteristics of genuine love and therefore not what a genuine follower of Christ should pursue.....but instead:

1) _____ becomes the appropriate expression of a follower of Christ

2) _____ is what we as believers ought to be and what we ought to do (James 1:22)

Love that Distributes (I John 3:16-17)

1. Christ is our greatest example of true love (I John 3:16)

- We (as believers) came to know what true and genuine love really is because of Jesus Christ:
 - 1) “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (I John 3:16)
 - 2) “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)
 - 3) “But God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8)
 - 4) “By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (I John 4:9-11)
- The apostle Paul sums it up this way; “Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, **make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love**, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfish or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; **do not merely look out for your own personal interest, but also for the interests of others**. Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:1-8)

- There is a unique contrast (that we don't want to miss) between the character and qualities of Jesus and the character and qualities of Cain:

1) Jesus lived a life of _____ and _____

2) Cain lived a life of _____ and _____

- The fact that Jesus gave His life for us shows just how far our love for one another should go. (I John 3:16)

1) The giving of one's life for another brother or sister may be the most extreme test of love and perhaps something that we would rarely be called to do, but it is a part of the nature of a believer to love as God loves.

2) I think that John is teaching that a follower of Christ ought to be quick to love rather than quick to hate.

3) By using such an extreme example of love (the giving of our lives for another), it is easier to see that in the smaller and more practical things in life is where we can have a great impact on others by showing love and compassion as Jesus did, which John will focus on in the next two verses.

2. How should we then show love? (I John 3:17)

- Love with genuine _____ just as God loves:

1) The apostle John chooses to emphasize that our purpose in this life goes beyond just ceasing to do evil, but he also stresses the importance of expressing the love that is in our hearts in a meaningful and tangible way.

2) "But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? (I John 3:17)

3) John is sharing an important principle that it is our role (as individual believers) to care for the needs of our brothers and sisters that God has placed in our path (***should we have the means to do so***), even if it involves sacrifice. (Eph. 4:28, Luke 10:25-37, Galatians 6:10, Isaiah 1:16-17)

- Love with genuine _____ and _____, just as Jesus taught his disciples to do:
 - 1) In His **Sermon on the Mount**, Jesus would make application of Old Testament passages to teach His listeners what they already should be doing but often weren't. These principles (though not new) of loving others was what He taught to His disciples and would become the distinguishing mark of a genuine follower of Christ; "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. You have heard it was said, you shall love your neighbors and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for them who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father, who is in Heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt. 5:42-45)
 - 2) To the rich young ruler Jesus said; "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven; and come follow Me". (Matthew 19:21)
 - 3) To some of His disciples Jesus said; "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Luke 20:25-28)
 - 4) To show that our lives (as genuine believers) ought to be centered on love, Jesus declared these words to the Pharisees and Sadducees; "You shall love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it; you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40)
 - 5) As Jesus met with the disciples prior to His ascension to Heaven he said these words to Simon Peter; "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these? He said to Him, yes Lord you know that I love You. He said to him, feed my lambs" (John 21:15). Jesus stressed this caring for the "lambs" (God's children) three times to Peter because that is what he was called to do.

Love That Delivers (I John 3:18-24)

1. Through loving God

- When a believer is genuine about their love toward God there is a sense of confidence/deliverance that comes as a result of our obedience to God; “We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight” (I John 3:19-22)
- 1) We can know that we are of the truth, even when at times our hearts may condemn us and we feel inadequate, because God is well aware of our commitment to Him.
- 2) Notice what John is saying; **It is not “if we keep His commandments”**, but it is **“because we keep his commandments”** (by doing what is pleasing in His sight), that we have the confidence that He hears and answers our prayers.
- When Jesus was speaking to the religious leaders and He said to them **“Love the Lord God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind”**; it is precisely what we are to do and obedience to that (doing what He says), brings about the confidence that He hears us.
- John is telling his readers that this is how we know we are of the truth; in that no matter how inadequate we may feel, it is our obedience to God that serves as evidence of our belief and trust in Him and it is that which gives us confidence.
- It is those practical acts of love toward God and toward others that serves as evidence that our hearts and inward being has been changed/delivered, and that our new path follows what God intends.
- The confidence that we have is not in, nor should it ever be in our own self righteousness but our confidence comes in the righteousness of Christ; **“This is His commandment that we believe in the name of His son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.....”** (I John 3:23-24)

2. Through loving others

- This is how we know we are genuine followers of Christ; “Little children let us not love in word or with tongue but in deed and truth” (I John 3:18)
- There is action that comes as a result of being a follower of Christ; for just as we naturally love God, we ought to naturally love one another. One of the true tests of our obedience is in our willingness to do for one another.
- “This is His command, that we believe in the name of His son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us” (I John 3:23)
- “As a Christian actively engages in deeds of love (I John 3:18), and as he achieves boldness before God in prayer (Vs 21), he is doing what God commands: living a life of confidence in the name of Christ which is undergirded by love. Since faith and love, thus conceived, go together, this kind of life is seen as obedience to a single command”. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Volume 2, page 897*)

Concluding Thoughts

1. The true nature of a child of God is _____ by love
 - We _____ love because we _____ God
 - “Beloved let us love one another, for love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (I John 4:7)
2. The true nature of a child of God is _____ through love
 - We _____ love because God _____ love to us
 - “We love because He first loved us.....And this commandment we have from Him that the one who loves God should love his brother also” (I John 4:19-21)