

6. Loving in deed and truth

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When I was an elementary school kid in Seoul, Korea many decades ago, one day we were told a news about a Korean Army captain who saved 180 soldiers' lives in his company.

It was a grenade training session. The drill instructors showed the soldiers how to throw a grenade to enemy. One clumsy soldier from his company got into a trench to throw a grenade. After he pulled the safety pin off and jerked his arm backward to throw it forward, the live grenade flew off his hand backward to his fellow soldiers. For a moment, everyone was frozen, then one person yelled, "Grenade!"

While everyone was trying to run away from it, the commanding officer, the captain of the company threw himself over the grenade right before explosion. Of course, he was instantly killed and several others got injured. But if he didn't sacrifice himself for others, there would have been far more casualty that day.

Later they found this phrase from the diary of the captain who graduated from the Korean West Point, "I'd rather have a short and full life." They also found many nice comments about his company soldiers that showed how much he cared about them.

The captain's love and care for his soldiers didn't stop at the few words in his diary, but all the way to his ultimate sacrifice for them.

Last week we've learned from apostle John about being the children of God and sins. This morning, the Holy Spirit is going to tell us how to put what we've learned into practice.

A. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL

1 John 3:10 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.

Apostle John tells us the qualifications of the children of the devil:

- 1) The one who does not practice righteousness of God
- 2) The one who does not love his brother.

Some might think John is far too cold and harsh in saying some are children of the devil, supposing perhaps that John did not love people as Jesus did. But Jesus called people children of the devil also in John 8:41-45.

John 8:41-45 You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father--God." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. 43 Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.

In this passage, Jesus' point was important, establishing the principle that our spiritual parentage determines our nature and our destiny. If we are born-again, and have

God as our Father, it will show in our nature and destiny. But if we choose not to follow the Lord Jesus, by our choice, satan remains as our master and father and it will also show in our nature and destiny.

B. LOVE ONE ANOTHER

1 John 3:11-12 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, 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.

From the beginning of our Christian life, we were told to love one another. If you've been in the Lord for any length of time, you have heard this phrase for over and over. But it is just hard to do that to everybody.

Let me tell you why. Since we are still in this carnal flesh, we are bound to rub each other in wrong way. We can choose to tolerate the differences in characters and love one another or insist our own way and cause problems within the body of Christ. Isn't that the basic reason for church fight or split? As I said it before, the majority of the church split is not because of authenticity or indifference in the doctrines. It is because of our intolerable attitude and narrow mindset.

As a negative example, apostle John presents Cain, who was not right with God and who hated his brother. Cain is a good example of the failure to love. We can presume that Cain had a godly upbringing from his mom Eve and dad Adam that should have equipped him to love, but he chose not to. Cain's disobedience came from a lack of faith and his own pride. Consequently, they made him miserable. Eventually Cain refused the warning God gave him, and gave into the sin of hatred.

By the way, the Seventh Day Adventists believe that Cain was an offspring of the sexual relationship between Eve and satan. I don't see anywhere that was mentioned in the Bible. It is a wrong doctrine.

C. LOVE, THE EVIDENCE OF THE NEW BIRTH

1 John 3:13-15 Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. 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. 15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Cain's attitude represents the attitude of the present world system. The world hates Christ for the same reason Cain hated Abel. Christ shows up the world's sin and reveals its true nature. When the world, like Cain, comes face-to-face with reality and truth, it can make only one of two decisions: repent and change, or destroy the one who is exposing it.

We shouldn't be surprised when the world hates us. But we should be surprised when there is hatred among the body of Christ.

A love for the people of God is a basic sign of being born-again. If this love is not evident in our lives, our salvation can be questioned. The place of hatred, of jealousy, of bitterness we find ourselves in is a place of death. We need to pass from death over to life.

To hate our brother is to murder him in our hearts. Though we may not carry out the action, we wish that person dead. Or, by ignoring another person, we may treat them as if they were dead. Hatred can be shown passively or actively.

In the heart there is no difference. To hate is to despise, to cut off from relationship. Actual murdering is simply the fulfillment of that attitude. Every man who hates another has the venom of murder in his veins.

Matthew 5:21-22 "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!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

The issue here is not whether a murderer can become a Christian, but whether a man can continue being a murderer and still be a Christian. The answer is NO. The fact that we have never actually murdered anyone should not make us prideful or complacent. Have we ever harbored hatred in our hearts? Of course, we have. What did we do with them? Do we still have them or did we give them to the Lord?

Hatred does far more damage to the person who hates than it does anyone else. Hatred that is not confessed and dealt with by God actually puts a man into a spiritual and emotional prison.

The antidote for hatred is love. "Hateful and hating one another" is the normal experience of an unsaved person. But when a hateful heart opens to Jesus Christ, it becomes a loving heart. Then instead of wanting to "murder" others through hatred, one wants to love them and share with them the message of eternal life in Jesus.

D. LOVE IN DEED, NOT JUST WORDS

1 John 3:16-19 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? 18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. 19 And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.

The test of Christian love is not simply failure to do evil to others. Christian love involves sacrifice and service. Christ did not simply talk about His love. Rather He died to prove it. Jesus was not killed as a martyr. He willingly laid down His life for us. "Self-preservation" is the first law of physical life, but "self-sacrifice" is the first law of spiritual life.

We use the same word 'love' in a wide range of spectrum – from "I love my truck" to "I love my wife". They do not express the same depth or meaning, but from the word itself we cannot tell the difference. But there are four types of love in Greek vocabulary which we don't have in English.

- 1) 'Eros' describes, as we might guess from the word itself, erotic love. It referred to sexual love.
- 2) 'Storge' refers to family love, the kind of love there is between a parent and child, or between family members in general.
- 3) 'Phileo' speaks of a brotherly friendship and affection. It is the love of deep friendship and partnership. It might be described as the highest love that is capable without God's help.

4) 'Agape' describes a love without changing. It is a self-giving love that gives without demanding or expecting re-payment. It is love so great that it can be given to the unlovable or unappealing. It is love that loves even when it is rejected. Agape love gives and loves because it wants to.

I will give you one chance for you to guess what kind of love God wants us to have for one another. Yes, it is 'AGAPE'.

This is not an easy study for me to teach. By nature, I am not a very loving person. By nature, I am a vengeful person. By nature, I would be the one who holds grudge against others. By the ever-enduring grace of God, I am better than before, yet I have a long, long way to go. Oh, how many times the Holy Spirit revealed to me my short coming while I studied this portion of the Scripture!

E. NEITHER DO I CONDEMN YOU

1 John 3:20-22 For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. 22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

This reminds me the conversation between Jesus and the woman who got caught in the very act of adultery.

John 8:10-11 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

If there is anyone who has the right to condemn, it would have been the sinless Savior Jesus. But He just forgave her sins. So there is nothing to condemn her from the eyes of God, and He gives her a clear command, "sin no more."

Condemnation can well up inside us that has nothing to do with our standing before God. It may be the work of the enemy of our souls, or the work of an over-active conscience. At those times, we trust in what God's Word says about our standing, not how we feel about it.

The Bible teachers from the Word of Faith Movement go ballistic with this v22 to justify their prosperity doctrine. They insist that we can ask God anything we want and God has to do what we ask of Him. It is completely out of context and it is a heresy.

The key to prayer is being in such close fellowship with God that we ask for the things that are on His heart. We take up His agenda with our requests and intercession. Naturally, He would do what we ask of Him because they are already His.

F. ABIDING IN CHRIST

1 John 3:23-24 And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. 24 Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

"Abiding in Christ" is a key experience for a believer who wants to have confidence toward God and enjoy answers to prayer. However, "abiding in Christ" depends on our obeying His Word and keeping a clean life in Him.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) Hatred does far more damage to the person who hates than it does anyone else.

When a hateful heart opens to Jesus Christ, it becomes a loving heart. That is what the Lord wants us to have.

2) Christian love involves sacrifice and service to others.

We cannot say that we love other brothers and sisters with our words only, but we also must show our love to them with our sacrifice and service.

3) We must remember that condemnation does not come from God, but He gives us conviction to repent.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

4) "Abiding in Christ" is a key experience for a believer who wants to have confidence toward God and enjoy answers to prayer.

However, "abiding in Christ" depends on our obeying His Word and keeping a clean life in Him.