

1 John 3 v 11-24.

¹¹ For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹² Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brothers were righteous. ¹³ Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters,^[a] if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

¹⁹ This is how we know that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence: ²⁰ If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. ²⁴ The one who keeps God's commands lives in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

So far there may seem to be repetitive themes that run through 1 John, contained within the five chapters there is a re-emphasis on specific points. These would include Gods love for us through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, the assurance of forgiveness when we confess and turn to our Heavenly Father, living a righteous life in Christ with the help of the Holy Spirit. And also continuing to abide and walk in Christ, but equally emphasised is the love we should have for the Lord and for one another.

I've heard more than one bible expositor say that 1 John is like a mirror that we hold up to our soul that will reflect back where we really stand with God and where our heart and maturity are in regards to our walk with Him.

And John can't seem to express this enough when he constantly comes back to loving one another and loving the brethren.

Verse 12 speaks of the world's first recorded murder the account in Genesis ch4.

Cain and Abel had brought an offering before the Lord, Cain brought the fruit of the land and Abel the first born of his flock. God accepts and is pleased with Abel's offering but isn't so with Cain's. This leads to a fit of rage and jealousy towards his brother Abel and when he has an opportune moment, he kills his brother. Now we could here say that this is in some way a picture of the gospel in that Abel took the first born of his flock and offered it as a sacrifice to God pointing the death of Jesus at Calvary that enabled that gulf between God and man to be bridged. And equally that Cain's efforts are representative of man's attempt to appease God by his own produce, his good works etc, to win the Lord's approval, but of course we know its only the complete work of Jesus on the cross that covers man in his sin.

But what a terrible thing hatred and jealousy and envy are, and how destructive and corrosive they can be in the life of a Christian.

V15 says, whoever hates his brother is a murderer and eternal life doesn't reside in him. This is a serious matter and if we are harbouring any such feelings, particularly towards a brother or sister in Christ it needs to be hung on the cross and crucified. And if we don't love our brothers and sisters the scriptures say we are abiding in death.

The Romans and other secular scholars in the ancient world would say, look how they love one another, speaking of the early church. And that's an edict that hasn't gone away. In fact, Christ commands it in all the gospels as do the apostles in all their writings.

Now that doesn't mean that we are going to get on, like a house on fire with every believer we meet or we are going to agree on every point. We're going to gravitate towards people we share interests with, things we have in common, theologies we agree on. In fact, there will be tensions and differences amongst us at times.

But that's why Jesus in the beatitudes says things such as not to look upon a man or woman with lust, as its akin to committing adultery in your heart, and do not be angry with your brother or sister as its likened to murdering them in your heart.

Jesus knows what we are like, once those thoughts are there, you're on the road to doing that you harbour in your soul, and for some that can be a lot sooner than they imagined. Jesus saw the danger, Cain and Abel screams at us from Genesis to what happens to us if we are not controlled by the Spirit and sowing to our flesh, the old man who wants to be boss in our lives.

Friends don't hold onto these feelings for one second, take it straight to the foot of the cross, take hold of Him for all you need to overcome and ask Him to renew your Spirit and put within you a pure heart. Christ is willing and able to do it and is more than pleased to do so when we seek Him.

You see we will be fed all sorts of garbage that we can then use to justify our feelings of hate and resentment. People will tell you have every right to hold onto these emotions but what does John say in verse 16, which is one of the major tenants of our faith.

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. This fits exactly with Jesus words in John 15 v 13. Greater love has no man who lays down his life for His friends. In Romans 5 v7-8 says, very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person but good person might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this. While we were still sinners Christ died for us.

Now all of us are beneficiaries of Gods love through Christ and this should be the antidote to any hatred or bitterness we hold in our hearts.

Jesus by His supreme example shows us His servant heart and that is what He asks of us also. To lay our lives down for the body is the

highest of callings. It could be that we are asked to physically give our lives to save another or in the ministry Christ has called us to, many throughout history and indeed today have given their lives for the glory of God and His kingdom. But more often or not it will be in the Lord's service, giving of our time and energy to help others, having that servant heart, metaphorically being a foot washer.

More often than not we won't get the accolades or credit for what we do, most of it will go unnoticed, and the right hand doesn't know what the left is doing. But your reward will be in Heaven and we do this unto the honour and love of God because He commands it.

As it says in verse 18, let us not love in word and tongue, but in deed and truth. Actions speak louder than words, love finds expression in our deeds and works, how we care for one another considering others before ourselves, all part of laying our lives down. And verse 19 that this will give us that assurance in Him and peace in our hearts. We know that when we truly are following this command of Jesus, we are in the right place with Him, we are fulfilling His will and purpose in our lives.

Verses 20 and 21 give us confidence as believers. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence towards God.

The Holy Spirit is greater than our hearts and knows everything, when we sin and fall short of God's glory, He convicts us and draws us back to Him.

The Lord sees all our motives and intentions but that's not to make us feel worried or to let our conscience condemn us. How easily we fall into a dark place when we have sinned and all sorts of despairing thoughts go through our minds. But the Holy Spirit's role is to gently draw us back, to correct. And as we go deeper with Jesus, we get more alert and wiser to sin, we don't keep falling down the same manhole as it were.

Praise God for His correction, it means He cares, that we are His, remember He corrects and chastises those He loves. It means we are on the right track.

Finishing off today let's look at 22 through 24, And whatever we ask we receive from him because we keep His commandments and do things that are pleasing in His sight.

Phil 4 v19 states. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now this scripture is not in here to support the prosperity gospel or those who see God as some celestial Gennie. What it is a sure promise that if we are in Him, we can truly trust in the Lord to furnish and equip us with every spiritual and practical gift to accomplish the work He has for us.

But in verses 23 and 24 there are three stipulations that the Lord and John here lay down here.

Firstly, and obviously, we have to believe on the name of the Son Jesus Christ, this though isn't just some mental ascent and acknowledgement of who He is. It is to trust completely in His saving grace and to also love Him with all of our soul, mind and being but secondly to love one another. This echoes the first two of the ten commandments often said to be the most important because if we genuinely do these two, love God, Jesus with all our being and our neighbour as ourselves, then the rest of those commandments should fall into place much more smoothly.

Thirdly and crucially, he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in us. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit He has given us.

Too frequently today when the gospel is presented people are told just to believe. But as we saw earlier repentance or turning from sin is a requirement to right fellowship with the Lord and so is keeping His commandments which can only be done when abiding in Him. Jesus says in John's gospel, if you love me obey my commandments.

Because the Lord doesn't just want to save us, He wants to change our lives. If we don't obey His commandments our walk with Him and witness to the world around us is going to be superficial and shallow.

So, what's the takeout from today. To summarise as believers, we cannot let hate have dominion over us, if we retain it within us, it will eventually manifest in awful ways. We can't be vessels of Christ and let it so embitter us because the Holy Spirit can't or won't move and that fellowship with the Lord will never be right.

If any of us are harbouring such bitterness, we need to come to Christ and lay it down, seek His healing and peace be able to let go and forgive, its vital to do this. And if you are struggling share with a mature and trusted friend in the Lord to stand with you on this. Throw off anything that will hinder you and stop you completing the race. The only hate we should entertain is to hate the works of darkness and of course, the things that God hates

That as Jesus demonstrated at Calvary and His time amongst us, the greatest love one can show is to lay his/her life down for his friends. Maybe we could be called to pay the ultimate price as Jesus did, or give of our time, energies, love and service to our church family.

To remember we have an advocate in Christ when we feel convicted and that the work of the Holy Spirit is an assurance in our lives that the Lord is working and perfecting us for His glory.

That the Lord is able to give of all His riches from His storehouse to enable us to fulfil the purposes He has for us. He really will give us the tools to do the job. And that the Holy Spirit witnesses to our spirit to give us that affirmation that we are sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father.

In many ways there are repetitive phrases used in John, I'm sure we will see more of the same as we go into chapters 4 and 5. But remembering the old political slogan, back to basics from the 90s, its

really good to go back and take a rain check on our progress, we can never do that enough. If you have a cake in the oven its good to check on it every so often to make sure its not getting burnt and still moist.

So bless you hope to carry on with John in a few weeks.

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