

BROTHERLY LOVE (I John 3:10-24)

INTRODUCTION

- 1 In the book of first John, John describes and contrasts two different kinds of people:
 - a One who continuously practices sin, and is therefore "of the devil" - 1 Jn 3:8a
 - b One "born of God," who does not continuously practice sin - 1 Jn 3:9

- 2 John continues to illustrate the contrast between "the children of God" and "the children of the devil" in 1 Jn 3:10, presenting two criteria which distinguishes them:
 - a Practicing righteousness
 - b Brotherly love

- 3 Both of these "criteria" have already been introduced earlier in this epistle
 - a John enjoined "brotherly love" as necessary to "abiding in the light" - 1 Jn 2:9-11
 - b He connected "practicing righteousness" to being "born of Him" - 1 Jn 2:29; 3:7

- 4 It is primarily the subject of "brotherly love" that John expounds upon throughout the rest of this epistle. We are commanded to love one another - it is not an optional matter:
 - a ***"Let brotherly love continue." (Heb 13:1)***
 - b ***"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;" (Rom 12:10)***
 - c ***"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:" (1 Pet 1:22)***
 - d ***"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." (John 15:12)***

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF BROTHERLY LOVE (3:10-15)

I IT DISTINGUISHES THE CHILDREN OF GOD (10-13)

- A TWO THINGS "MANIFEST" THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD'S CHILDREN AND THE DEVIL'S CHILDREN (10)
 - 1 The word "manifest" means:
 - a To show or demonstrate plainly; reveal
 - b To be evidence of; prove
 - 2 That which clearly demonstrates the children of God are:
 - a The practice of righteousness
 - b The love of the brethren
 - 3 Whereas those who are the children of the devil are clearly revealed when they:
 - a Do not practice righteousness
 - b Do not have brotherly love

- B THE COMMAND TO LOVE IS "FROM THE BEGINNING" (11)
 - 1 I.e., from the beginning of the gospel, spoken by Jesus Himself (Matt 5:43ff; Jn 13:34-35)
 - 2 Note that Jesus also stressed how loving one another would make the children of God (His disciples) "manifest" to the world: "by this all will know" - Jn 13:35

- C EXPECT SOME CONFLICT BETWEEN THESE TWO "CHILDREN" (12-13)
 - 1 Just as Cain killed his brother Abel
 - a He who was of the wicked one killed his brother
 - b The murder was sparked by the contrast between the works of the two
 - 2 So don't be surprised if the world hates you as well - cf also Jn 15:18-20

[When we follow the teachings of Jesus, especially His command to love one another, it soon becomes evident ("manifest") that we are different from those of the world. But that difference sometimes leads to jealousy and its unpleasant consequences. What imperative is there, then, to heed a command that makes us stand out so? Well, as John continues]

II IT DESIGNATES A PASSING FROM DEATH TO LIFE (14-15)

A IT IS A MARK OF TRUE CONVERSION (14a)

- 1 Certainly brotherly love is not the ONLY indicator
- 2 Remember that we must also practice righteousness - cf Ga 5:22-23
- 3 But love for the brethren is a positive sign that true conversion has occurred

B WHEREAS LACK OF LOVE IS AN OMINOUS SIGN (14b-15)

- 1 That one "abides in death"
- 2 As we saw earlier, one who hates his brother "is in darkness until now" - 1 Jn 2:9,11
- 3 Indeed, hating one's brother makes one a murderer! (just like Cain)
- 4 And it should be self-evident that a murderer does not possess eternal life!

C WHEN CHRISTIANS DO NOT LOVE THEIR BRETHERN

- 1 It MAY be an indication that true conversion never occurred, and that they are Christians in name only
- 2 It MAY be that there was true conversion:
 - a But the Christian is still a "babe in Christ" - cf 1 Co 3:1-3
 - b Or that what the writer of Hebrews feared has occurred - cf He 3:12-14
- 3 In ANY circumstance, it is not what God desires for us!

THE DEFINITION OF BROTHERLY LOVE (3:16-18)

The apostle John has given us two reasons in 1 Jn 3:10-15 for why it is necessary that we love the brethren:

- a. Along with practicing righteousness, it distinguishes the children of God
- b. It signifies a passing from death to life

But what does it really mean to love the brethren? And what benefits do we receive in return when we possess brotherly love?

I THE DEFINITION OF BROTHERLY LOVE (16-18)

A JESUS EXEMPLIFIES WHAT IT MEANS TO LOVE THE BRETHERN (16)

- 1 The word for love (Grk, agape), has often been described as "active goodwill"
- 2 In giving His life for our sins, Jesus certainly demonstrated goodwill in an active way
- 3 By meditating upon His example, we are "taught of God to love one another" - cf 1 Th 4:9
- 4 With Jesus' example, then, we come to understand what brotherly love is all about: sacrificially serving others!
 - a Therefore we should be willing to lay down our lives for one another
 - b In some cases, it may indeed involve "dying" for our brethren; but it can also be "living" for them through serving

B AN EXAMPLE OF FAILING TO SHOW BROTHERLY LOVE (17)

- 1 John uses the example of not helping a brother when it is within your power to do so
- 2 In view of Christ's love, how can we claim to have love if we are not willing to sacrifice for a brother in need?
- 3 This illustrates that brotherly love is not only being willing to "die" for someone, but willing to "live" for them as well, through active service on their behalf

- C THEREFORE, AN ADMONITION TO "TRUE LOVE" (18)
 - 1 An admonition prefaced by John's favorite term of endearment: "My little children"
 - 2 To love, not just in words, but truly, through deeds!

[We see, then, that "brotherly love" which 1) distinguishes the children of God, and 2) signifies one as having passed from death to life, must go beyond the spoken word or occasional hymn. Patterned after the example of Jesus, "brotherly love" is manifested by what one does, not just by what one says (cf 1 Co 13:4-8). The blessedness of such love is not only for the recipient, but also for the giver, as we learn beginning in verse 19]

THE EVALUATION OF BROTHERLY LOVE (19-24)

II THE EVALUATION OF BROTHERLY LOVE (19-24)

- A IT GIVES ONE ASSURANCE BEFORE GOD (19-21)
 - 1 Love of the brethren is an indication that one is "of the truth", just as it was an indication that one had passed from death to life (1 Jn 3:14)
 - 2 It is certainly not the only indicator (cf 1 Jn 3:10), but it does help to provide one with assurance of their salvation
 - 3 The importance of such assurance:
 - a If our own hearts condemn us
 - 1) Because we know we do not love the brethren as we ought
 - 2) Certainly God, who is greater and knows all things, will know of our shortcomings in this area ("If conscience condemn us in known sin, or the neglect of known duty, God does so too" - Matthew Henry)
 - b But if our hearts do NOT condemn us
 - 1) Because we are loving the brethren as we know we should
 - 2) This will make us able to approach God with joyful confidence!

- B IT LEADS TO POSITIVE ANSWERS TO PRAYER (22-23)
 - 1 Our prayers are more likely to be answered according to our requests
 - 2 Because we are keeping the commandments of God (of which loving the brethren is one), and thereby pleasing Him
 - 3 "Commandment-keeping" is a condition upon which God hears prayer, just as it is a condition upon which Christ promises His abiding love - Jn 15:10

- C IT ENSURES THAT ONE ABIDES IN CHRIST (24)
 - 1 Abiding in Christ is contingent upon keeping His commandments (and loving the brethren is certainly one of His commandments) - cf Jn 14:23
 - 2 And how do we know that Christ truly abides in those who keeps His commandments?
 - a By the Spirit whom Christ has given
 - b He (the Spirit) is the one Who reminded the apostles of the key to abiding in Christ - cf Jn 14:19-26