

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

1 JOHN 3:10-24

John tells us in this little epistle that there are two distinguishing characteristics of a Christian....**verse 10**... We saw last week that one of those characteristics is that **we live a righteous life** and today we will see that the Christian will also **live a life that loves the brethren**, and John is going to teach us how that is “fleshed out” in the life of a believer.

John begins this teaching by looking at the negative...John teaches us what love is not and where love **cannot be**. And by looking at what and where love **is not** maybe we can know what and where love **is!**

1) Love Cannot Be Where Murder Is...(verses 11-12)

Where did Cain come from? Well, of course we know that Cain was the firstborn son of Adam and Eve, but look at **verse 12**...

Adam and Eve had Cain and they also had a son named Abel. These two boys had the same mother and father, yet they were very different...

Cain and Abel were of the same family physically, but they were of different families spiritually. Cain was of his father, the devil.

All people fall into one of two categories. You are either in the family of God and are a child of God, or you are in the family of the devil and are a child of the devil...and John says that Cain was a child of the devil.

What did Cain do? Cain killed his brother...Cain slew his brother. This word “slew” means “to put to death by violence...to butcher, to kill a person by cutting his throat...”

We live in a time when murder is rampant. Pick up any newspaper and listen to any TV newscast and someone has murdered someone. We’ve almost become hardened to it, haven’t we? All murder is horrible...but it’s particularly horrible when the murder happens to be a brother killing another brother.

The reason Cain slew Abel was because God had accepted Abel’s sacrifice but He hadn’t accepted Cain’s sacrifice. **Abel had come to God on God’s terms and Cain had come to God on his own terms.** Abel offered God the firstborn of his flock...a blood offering...and Cain offered God “fruit of the ground...”

Now, what was wrong with that? Well, I believe that God had made it very clear to these men what He expected. I believe God had told them He wanted a blood sacrifice because ***it would picture and foreshadow and be a type of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.***

Abel obeyed and Cain disobeyed. **Abel’s heart was to do what God wanted him to do and Cain’s heart was to do what Cain wanted to do.**

People are still trying to come to God on their own terms. But there’s only one way...***the blood sprinkled way...the way of the Cross...the faith way...***

Hebrews 11:4... “By **faith** Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.”

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

When Cain's sacrifice was rejected by God, when his attempt at salvation was not accepted...then envy and jealousy in his heart brought forth murder, and in **1 John 3:11-12**, we see that **love cannot be where there is murder.**

At this point you're probably breathing a sigh of relief and saying, "but I've never murdered anyone..." Well, let's see something else that John tells us about where and what love is not...

2) Love Cannot Be Where Hatred Is...(verses 13-15)

Do you see what God says when we say we haven't murdered anyone? He says, "Yes, you're right...but remember for a Christian hatred is the same as murder in My sight."

See, the only difference between murder and hatred **is the outward taking of a life**. The inward intent is the same in God's eyes. The only reason some of us haven't actually murdered anyone is fear of being punished...fear of being put to death...but God doesn't look at what we've **done** but what we **want** to do.

Now, of course, hatred in the heart doesn't do the same outward damage that murder does...I mean if I hate my neighbor he'd a whole lot rather I just hate him than murder him...but God looks on our heart and if He sees a heart full of hatred...it's as bad as a heart full of murder.

Have you ever hated someone? Has someone ever hurt you so badly and wounded you so deeply that it made you hate that person? Maybe the hurt wasn't done to you, but it was done to your child or to your husband or to your parent and in your heart, you really truly hated that person...

Maybe you would say, "Well, I didn't actually hate but I was very, very angry." That sounds better to us, doesn't it...it sounds far more acceptable to be angry than to hate and surely far better to be angry than to murder...

But, Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that if anyone is angry, he is guilty!!

Let me ask you this...Have you ever been bitter towards anyone? (By the way... Do you think I'm meddling? Well, rest assured, I had to ask myself these questions this week as I prepared this lesson!!) God says we're not to let bitterness invade our life...**Hebrews 12:15**:

"See to it that no one comes short of the glory of the grace of God; that no bitterness springing up causes trouble and by it many are defiled."

See, Beloved, God knows things are going to happen to His children that will tempt us to be **angry** and **bitter** and full of **hatred**, but He says to us that as His children we're simply not to be angry and bitter and full of hatred. Why? Because He doesn't want us to be defiled...he doesn't want us hurt...

See, hatred and bitterness and anger doesn't hurt the other person nearly as much as it hurts us! Hatred does the hater far more damage that it does anyone else.

So, what are we to do with bitterness and hatred? **Ephesians 4:31**:

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you.”

Again, I'm not saying a Christian will never ever be bitter or angry or even have feelings of hatred. But I am saying on the authority of God's precious Word that a Christian must not have a **continuous, persistent, habitual** attitude of **hatred** and **malice** and **bitterness** and **anger**. And, if these things are present in your life on an ongoing basis, day after day and week after week and month after month...I believe it's an indication of a real problem...***and you need to take that problem to the Lord and earnestly and honestly seek His help in laying that burden of anger and bitterness and hatred aside.***

Beloved...LET GOD DEAL WITH IT!! “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” saith the Lord. Let Him deal with it!!

Well, we've seen that love cannot be where murder is, nor can it be where hatred is...Let's look at something else...

3) Love Cannot Be Where Indifference Is...(verses 16-18)

The test of Christian love is not simply failure to do evil to others...it is not simply the absence of murder or hatred or anger. Love also requires us to do good...

John is saying, “Look at the example we have for living a loving life. Look at what Jesus did for us...He laid down His life for us and we should do the same thing.”

Now, I can tell just by looking at all of us this morning that none of us have actually laid down our life for anyone. I mean we're all breathing and living. Some of us may look more alive than others, but I just know we are all alive!! I mean, God has just gifted me with that insight!!

I believe God doesn't call many of His children to physically give up their lives, but I do believe He calls all His children to help a brother or sister in need.

Indifference is the height of hypocrisy and disobedience, folks. Since we say we're Christian, and since Jesus said that it's by our love for each other that the world will know we belong to Him, what must the world think of us when they see Christians being indifferent and uncaring of the needs of others?

We're not to be indifferent and uncaring...

And that brings me to the positive part of our lesson...

We've looked at **three negatives**...let's look at **the positive** that John sets before us...

Christian Love...(verse 18)

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

To love “in word” means simply “to talk” about a need, but to love “in deed” means to do something about meeting that need.

Many times we may think that because we’ve discussed a need or even prayed about the need that we’ve done our duty...but God expects us to do more. God expects us to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters.

Now, this could be done in many ways. It could mean taking a **meal** to someone. It could mean **cleaning** someone’s house. It could mean **paying** someone’s bills. It could mean **sewing** for someone...**babysitting** for someone...It could mean **just listening** to someone...just sitting across from someone over lunch or dinner and listening. It could mean **exhorting** and **encouraging** or even **admonishing** someone.

I believe this class knows how to love, but I want to challenges this coming year to love even more. There are hurting folks in our church and some of them are even in our own class. Let’s covenant together to reach out...above and beyond what we’ve ever done before.

God is so good! He has given us incentive enough to show Christian love...and that incentive is that it will show forth in an obvious way that we are true believers...but there’s more...He has promised us blessings for our obedience.

I want us to see **three wonderful blessings** that will come to the believer who practices Christian love...

1) Assurance...(verses 19-20)

John tells us here that our heart may condemn us, and I want to explore with you two different ways our hearts may do this. One of them is good and one is not...

A) If you’re a child of God and there’s sin in your life, or any area of disobedience in your life, the Holy Spirit will convict you.

He will speak to your spirit and He will remind you of what you’ve done or what you have not done, and how you need to make this right before God.

If there’s something God has called you to do and you’ve put it off and put it off, the Holy Spirit will remind you and convict you until you’re miserable in your disobedience.

I’ve heard folks say, “the preacher sure stepped on my toes today...” Beloved, God’s not interested in stepping on your toes...He wants to break your heart... He wants your heart broken over your sin and disobedience and if there is anything in your life that is contrary to the will of God...then your heart ought to condemn you until you apply **1 John 1:9** to it.

But, having said that...let me say this...

B) **If you’ve confessed and obeyed and repented**...and if to the very best of your knowledge and ability you have done what God has called you to do to be right with Him and your brothers and your sisters in Christ, and yet your heart still condemns you...that’s not God, folks...that’s not the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, that’s the condemnation of the enemy.

The devil likes nothing better than to remind us of old sins and old shortcomings and old failures.

This word “assure” means “to soothe, to put at rest...” God wants our hearts to be **at rest** before Him and to be **at peace** before Him...to be **assured** before Him.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Remember Peter's denial? Remember Jesus told Peter that before the cock crowed he would deny Him three times, and Peter said, "Oh, no, Lord I'll never do that...why, I'm willing to die for You, Lord..." And we all know what Peter did. Peter denied Jesus exactly as Jesus told him he would.

Scripture tells us that after Peter heard that old cock crow, **he wept**. Now folks weep for different reasons...I have a real problem with weeping. I weep at super market openings. If tears offend you, then I'm afraid I'll offend you over and over. Some of my tears come just simply because I'm a very sentimental type of person...but the tears Peter shed that day were **tears of remembrance and tears of repentance**.

Peter remembered how he had been so self-assured that he wouldn't deny the Lord Jesus and he repented of his failure.

Can't you just imagine Peter thought something like this... "Look what I've gone and done...I've denied the only One who ever gave my life any meaning and purpose...the only One who really loved me unconditionally...the only One who ever put a song in my heart...the only One who forgave me of every sin I had ever committed..." Don't you just think Peter was thinking along these lines? Can't you put yourself in Peter's place? Have you ever been there?

And you know what happens in the midst of all that? The devil comes to Peter and says, "Well, Peter, old boy, you're washed up. You'll never be welcome back in God's presence again. Jesus is through with you. You'll never preach a sermon. You'll never share the gospel again. You'll never perform any more miracles. You'll never have any more power. You're through, Peter...you might as well go back to fishing, because your career as a preacher is over."

See, that's what the devil's business is. He's constantly accusing the believer and bringing condemnation to the believer's heart. He accuses me and he accuses you about past sins that we've already confessed and repented of.

So, he told Peter that he might as well go back fishing and you know what? That's exactly what Peter did. He got all his fishing gear ready and went fishing and the Bible makes it clear that Peter wasn't on a little fishing excursion to take his mind off things...the verb Peter uses in the Gospel of John is a verb that means he's going fishing and he's going to continue to fish.

See, Peter was disgusted with himself...he was convinced he was a total failure, and he didn't think he had any reason to believe that he would ever be used by God to further His kingdom, and so he went back to the only thing he knew how to do to make a living...

Well, you know what happened...He and some of the other disciples were out there fishing and they hadn't caught anything and in the wee hours of the morning, there appeared a figure on the shore. That figure cried out and asked them if they'd caught any fish...and they hadn't caught any, even after fishing all night.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Well, Jesus told them where to cast their nets...and when they did what Jesus told them to do, they caught 153 BIG FISH. then, Jesus invited them to have breakfast with Him. Don't you imagine all during breakfast...even as glad as Peter must have been to see Jesus, don't you imagine the devil came against Peter and said, "Peter, you denied Him...you denied Him...and Peter, He's through with you..."

But, do you remember the rest of the story? After breakfast, Jesus looked at Peter and said, "Peter, do you love Me?" And the devil said, "See there, what did I tell you...He doesn't even know if you love Him or not. You denied Him. You denied Him."

So, what does Peter say to Jesus? He says, "Yes, Lord, I love You." And Jesus asked Peter a second time. And Peter said, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You."

On those two occasions, the word for "love" in the Greek was "agape", the highest form of love that Jesus could use...**unconditional love**...And on both occasions, Peter had said, "Lord I 'phileo' You. I love You as a brother."

Why do you think Peter could not say, "Yes, I love You with that wonderful, unconditional agape kind of love." I believe it was because the devil was over there condemning Peter...beating Peter over the head with his sin.

So Jesus asks Peter one more time... "Peter, do you love Me?" and Peter said, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love (phileo) You." And do you remember what Jesus said to Peter then...He said, "Tend My sheep."

Peter must have thought, "Wait a minute! The devil's been telling me that because I denied Jesus then Jesus couldn't use me anymore. Yet, Jesus is telling me to feed His sheep."

Now, look back at **verse 20**...Now this ought to get us excited, folks!

You know what that means...it means, Beloved, that you and I don't have to believe the lies of Satan. It means that if I know that I've confessed every sin that the Holy Spirit of God has revealed to my heart, and if I've asked God to forgive me of those sins...**then, I no longer have to be condemned in my heart!!**

**Listen, God does not need to be informed about us. I can't tell God anything about you and you can't tell God anything about me, and neither can Satan!
God knows all about us and yet He longs to give us a fresh start...a clean slate!**

See, David tells us in Psalm 103:

"God has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

For high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.

As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.

For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust.”

Folks, one of the blessings of loving our brothers and sisters in Christ is **assurance**. But, there is another blessing:

2) Answered Prayer...(verses 21-22)

Love for the brethren produces confidence before God and confidence before God gives you boldness in asking for what you need. This doesn't mean that you **earn answers to prayer by loving the brethren**...but it **does** mean that your love for the brethren proves that you're living in the will of God and it's when we're in the will of God that we see our prayers answered.

This principle is repeated over and over in Scripture...

Peter tells husbands to treat their wives in such a way that their prayers may not be hindered...**1 Peter 3:7**

David tells us to delight ourselves in the LORD...another way of saying “be obedient to Him” and He will give us the desires of our heart...Psalm 37:4

Jesus said that if we abide in Him and His words abide in us, we're to ask whatever we wish, and it shall be done for us.

And by contrast, the psalmist said that if we regard wickedness in our heart...the Lord will not hear...

One last thing and we'll be through...

3) Abiding...(verses 23-24)

Please notice there are two parts to this abiding...

We abide in Him and He abides in us!!

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

What an absolutely incredible thing that the Holy Spirit of God would come and take up residence in my heart...

I want to ask you...is He in your heart, too?

Was there ever a time in your life when you knew you were a sinner, and you knew you needed a Savior and you knew you could not save yourself? Was there a time in your life that you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that the blood that Jesus shed at Calvary cleansed **you** from **your** sins?

Well, if you did, the Holy Spirit lives within you and if you didn't, He doesn't...it's as simple as that!!

Are you a child of God or a child of the devil? Are you demonstrating your relationship with the Lord by living a righteous life? Are you demonstrating your relationship with the Lord by loving the brethren? Is there anything in your life that you haven't committed to the will of God? Has He called you to do something that you have refused to do?

My prayer is that if you're not sure...or if your heart is condemning you because of something you need to confess, that you'll do that today.

My prayer is also that you will know in spite of the failures of your life...in spite of the devil who is the accuser of the brethren...in spite of all that – that you will have **the blessings of assurance and answered prayer and the peace of the abiding of the Holy Spirit upon your life.**

This lesson has been on love...

Love that reaches upward is **adoration**...

Love that reaches outward is **affection**...

Love that reaches downward is **grace**...

"For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, it is a gift of God...not as a result of works lest any man should boast."

John has written this little epistle so that **we might know that we're saved.** One of the ways we know it is to love the brethren...and this is a testimony to the lost world around us.

Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples..if you love one another."

May God help us to demonstrate this to the world around us!!