

Living in the Light of Love

(Updated 7/2020; Dr. Baines, Jr.)

Read: I John 2:9-11, 15-17

Summary Highlights: In vss. 9-11, the text teaches that one's level of love or hate has much to do with one being in the light or in darkness. To love one's brother means one is in the light. To hate one's brother means one is in darkness.

In vss. 15-17, the text urges one not to love the world or things in it. Several examples of those things in the world are listed. Doing the will of God leads to abiding forever, instead of passing away like the things in the world.

Introduction: A key idea in today's lesson is loving our siblings and not the world's wickedness are essential for God's people. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to love our siblings and keep from loving the wickedness of the world.

Applications:

1. Actions speak louder than words. Notice in vs. 9 that actions speak louder than words. For one to say that one is in the light but for one to not have the actions of love means that one is not speaking the truth. The tree is known by the fruit that it bears, not by the sign on it. *Let's work on having the actions that validate our confession of being disciples of Christ.* To say that we are disciples of Christ and yet we are not straining to be faithful in regular Bible study, reaching others for Christ, and at least giving a tithe unto the Lord is about as close to lying as the one who says he is in the light but hates his brother.

2. Love like a Christian. Notice in vs. 10 the emphasis put on loving our siblings. Loving our brothers should not be read as to mean that our sisters are not to be loved. When all is said and done, if we don't love one another, we don't have much going for us. Christianity is not simply a head religion that is known for quoting a bunch of scriptures and doctrines. Christianity is a love religion that is known for obeying God's will for us to love one another, even when we strongly prefer not to. Love is not be confused with only warm fuzzy feelings. Love is a verb that calls for a long suffering kindness. Love cultivates courtesy. Love seeks the salvation of the lost and growth of the immature. Love seeks to help those who are less fortunate, even if it means fighting to fix social and economic systems. *Let's work on validating our claim to be Christians by loving one another.*

3. Disciples of Christ don't hate. Notice in vs. 11 how hate is both an indication of being out of fellowship with God and an indication of one being without direction (i.e., blind). Every grown person has been mistreated by someone. To be a Christian does not mean that we deny being mistreated. To be a Christian means that we will not lower ourselves to hate those who mistreated us. We will not waste precious energy plotting revenge and acts of retaliation. To be clear, Blacks cannot be strong Christians and hate White people at the same time. Heterosexuals cannot be strong Christians and hate homosexuals at the same time. Furthermore, hate has a future negative impact. Not only does hate mess

up today, but it messes up tomorrow, because hate blinds the hater. Without sight, one loses one's ability to walk in the straight, narrow, and well-lit path of God's will. *Let's make sure we repent from anything that even looks like hate.* The best thing to do with those who tempt us to hate them is to love them and ask God to handle them. God can do more with our enemies than we could ever do.

4. Don't love this world's wickedness. Notice in vss. 15-16 the emphasis on not loving the world or the things in the world. The Sunday School commentary does a nice job of explaining that the word "world" is used in a number of ways in the Bible. Here it seems to mean wicked and ungodly motivations like the lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and pride of life. It doesn't mean to hate the beautiful foliage of the fall, the marvelous flowers of spring, or the breath-taking sunset on the horizon. *Let's work on keeping ourselves from loving the wicked things of this world.* Lust and pride are both bottomless pits that are never satisfied. And if they were satisfied, what profit a person to gain the world and lose one's soul? When we remind ourselves that all that we have comes from God then the silliness of pride should be obvious. We can keep our minds right by prayerfully studying and obeying God's word with the support of other believers.

5. God's will leads to everlasting life. Notice in vs. 17 that the world's wickedness is temporary but obeying God's will leads to everlasting life. No matter how great the world's wickedness may seem, it only lasts for a little while. But thanks be unto God, when we obey God's will, God's blessings and plans for us go past the grave. God's blessings and plans last forever. *Let's remind one another that only what we do for Christ will last.* Worship is a mighty good place to remind one another about the reality of serving a living God. Christian supportive relationships are great places to keep one another mindful that God is working things out for the good of His people.