

## 1 John 3:10-15

### "From Death To Life"

Comparing & contrasting. That's what John's been up to in this, our present passage. He's been reasoning w/us from both the positive & the negative position & he's trying to get us to understand that "the proof is in the practice" of a person's life. How can you know if you're truly a child of God. **How can you detect or discern if someone else is *truly* a child of God. The proof isn't in what I *say* (I can say any number of things that sound affirming to the Christian position). The proof *really lies* in what my life *characteristically* displays. The proof is in the practice. The phrase I threw out there last week was, "The *fruit* of my life will reveal the *root* of my life."**

\* The characteristic patterns of my life will reveal whether I'm a child of God, or a child of the devil. Now, I know that can sound a bit disturbing, or shocking to say. "I can't believe you'd call someone a child of the devil!" Well, I didn't. The word of God does! And in this world (or at least *our* current culture) w/so much emphasis being placed upon personal identity, ("I identify as \_\_\_\_") (& it's generally tied to gender), you need to understand something & that is this... **When you boil it down to the bottom line, when you get to the brass tacks of the matter, the Bible will *identify* everyone on this planet in 1 of 2 ways. You will either be identified as a child of God, or a child of the devil... & There will be certain characteristic patterns in place that testify to that reality in people's lives.**

For example, back in Vs 7 Jn said, "... let no one deceive you, he who practices righteousness *is righteous* (just as He is righteous). He who sins is of the devil..." The principle in place being that Jesus was manifested to *take away our sins* & to *destroy the works of the devil*. **Therefore the child of God won't (characteristically) sin, that won't be his/her practiced pattern. To live in sin is to show inconsistency w/the nature & purpose of Christ in our lives. Doesn't mean we'll never falter, but sin is the exception in the life of the child of God, not the habitual pattern of practice. & It's really that plain, \*** notice.

### \* Vs 10

Do you see how basic this really is? Sometimes it's difficult for us to receive something on a basic level. We think things like, "There's got to be more to it. I'm missing something here, it can't be that easy, not really." But John would say, "Yes, it really can be... & it really is!" Man likes to make things complicated. We like to seem scholarly. We like to cloud things in ambiguity, add all kinds of "what if" scenarios to see if we can tweak it slightly. But that's when things get convoluted, cloudy & confusing.

It's imperative that we resist the temptation to complicate the simple instruction, the simple truth of God's Word. That's how the enemy gets in there & starts to fill all the nooks & crannies, the "in between" areas. Paul exhorted the Corinthians after the same manner. He said, *"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."*<sup>1</sup> Don't stray from the simplicity that's in Christ. \*

"In this the children of God & the children of the devil are manifest: (or made known), whoever does not practice righteousness *is not of God.*" Do you see how simple that is? Don't make it more than it is. The fruit of their lives reveals the root of their lives. That's not "judging" anyone, that's simply acknowledging what the practiced pattern of a person's life reveals about the person. It's a simple statement of truth. – Regardless of what I might say, if I have no heart to live *for* God, it's not found in my heart to bring glory to God, I'm not a *child of God*.

These are what we might refer to as *indicators* or even *fingerprints* of the Spirit of God upon a person's life. – If a person has been born again, there will be certain *essential elements* about their life. One will be righteous conduct. (They will be a person of integrity, honesty, they'll be upright morally.) Here, John gives us another essential element in the life of one who is a child of God, *love* for other believers.

& I'm glad that the Spirit of God led John to say this because often people who are all about righteousness seem to be lacking in love. They can be "stuck up", "spiritual snobs", pharisaic in nature. If the Pharisees were about *anything* they were about righteousness (of course, theirs was a self-righteousness), but they completely lacked in love.

So, \* John says, "If you're born again of the Spirit of God, not only will there be the *absence* of something negative (Jesus was manifested to "take away" our sins), there will be the *presence* (the addition) of something positive, "love for the brethren".

& These are both essential. If you have righteousness w/out love (as we mentioned) you have self-righteous piety (spiritual snobbery), it can even escalate into brutality. If you have love w/out righteousness you have hypocrisy, accepting anything in the name of "love". "Just love them, accept them, don't offend them..." That's what was happening in the Corinthian church. & Paul was like, "What are you guys doing!?" True love is expressed *in* righteousness, not at the *expense of* righteousness! \*

<sup>1</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [2 Co 11:3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

\* Listen, when it comes to righteousness & love, we're never looking for a balance between the two. Why? Because they're not opposites! – I've spoken to you before of the absolute inseparable relationship between truth & love. They're so closely related that I submit to you, they're essentially one & the same. Love *is* truth & truth *is* love. You can't really administer one apart from the other... Here we learn the same may be said of love & righteousness. We don't need a balance *between* them, we need the full expression of *both* of them. Think of J.C., He perfectly displayed the full expression of righteousness and love. He didn't pull either back to "balance the scales". He fully/perfectly expressed both... We might even go so far as to say that love *is* righteousness in action & righteousness *is* love in action. \*

& It's not like this is some new/novel concept that John is bringing to the table, notice.

### Vs 11

Have you noticed that w/John, he's always taking us back to the beginning? It might be the beginning of time (as in his gospel). It might be the beginning of creation. Or even just the beginning of your walk w/Christ. \* When Jesus was walking amongst His disciples, He told them, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."<sup>2</sup> It's the most basic & foundational fact of the Christian life. If you belong to Jesus, you'll love others who belong to Him as well!

Sometimes people have this thought, "Well, I love the Lord, but man Christians get on my nerves!" "Me & Jesus, we're good, it's all His followers I have problems with!" Jesus says, "No", "No" 1,000xs "No! If you love Me, you'll love My family..." It's true that Christians talk a lot & place great emphasis upon a "personal relationship w/Jesus". We need that, we can't do life in Christ w/out that. Having said that, how we love *one another* (treat one another) – is a big deal before God! Doesn't mean it's always going to be easy, or that life in Christ & w/other Christians is a primrose, problem free path, far from it. Sometimes that love is hard fought, won through forgiveness/reconciliation & restoration. But make no mistake, if you're *in* Christ, you will love the body *of* Christ (other believers).

### Vs 12

Here's that contrast again. John seems to have a style of illustrating from extremes. Showing that ultimately, something is either *on* or it's *off*. It's *right* or it's *wrong*.

<sup>2</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Jn 13:35). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& If you're in Christ, you'll be about the *right* thing, unlike Cain who was about the *wrong* thing. His actions demonstrated something about his life. The fruit of his life revealed the root of his life. He was of... "the wicked one". He didn't love his brother; he *hated* his brother. He wasn't a child of God, he was a child of the devil!

Keep your place in 1 John, & let's go "back to the beginning" (as Jn likes to do) to Gen Ch 4. Let's take a brief look at exactly what John is talking about here.

### Vs 1-9

Gen 4 takes place directly after the fall of Adam & Eve. These are the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 boys they had. Now, there are several things we could consider about this passage. But we want to stay focused on John's point. He wants us to see the root, he wants us to see the fruit.

People like to speculate exactly why God accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's. The Bible tells us (Heb 11:4) that Abel made his offering in faith, Cain did not (that's really the bottom line). But w/out faith it's *impossible* to please God for the one who would come to Him must 1<sup>st</sup> of all believe that He is, & that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Cain may've had the right appearance outwardly (went through the right motions, went to church [as it were], gave an offering, it all had the right appearance), but his motive, the "why" behind the "what" was off inwardly... Man looks to the outward appearance, God searches the heart.

\* So God accepted Abel's offering, rejected Cain's. Rather than repent, or consider where *he* erred, Cain did what *we* like to do. He got mad at his brother, didn't like to see God's hand of blessing on Abel, after all, he's no better... So Cain became bitter, bitterness became hatred, & hatred became murder. Now, God tried to get in front of him, "Hey, Cain, why are you angry?" God's seeking to lead him to repentance, encouraging him to examine his own heart. "Look, if you repent; if you do well, I'll accept you. Listen to me Cain, sin is after you, it's seeking to dominate/destroy you." God is faithful to warn us isn't He? He tries to get in front of us. But Cain wasn't having it, wouldn't listen... He hated his brother – he murdered his brother.

His works were "evil". Or more literally, "pernicious". An *evil* person is willing to perish in their own corruption. But a *pernicious* person wants to drag everyone around them down into the same pit of destruction to which *they're* headed. That's satanic. \*

Couple things & we'll move on. #1 Cain's hatred resulted in murder. But Jesus said (Matt 5:21-22) that hatred & murder are the same thing (as far as the heart is concerned).

You don't have to murder someone physically to kill them off in your heart. They're dead to you. That's what hatred is.

#2 You should see that Satan's children can be "religious". Cain worshiped at an altar, went through the motions, made a sacrifice. Pharisees were the most religious people of their day. Religiousness isn't the true test of devotion to God. Love for God & for God's people is the true test. A true child of God won't be about hatred & seeking to tear others down, they'll show love & seek to build others up. (U might consider the parable to the tares, Matt 13:24-29,36-43) You can't always discern the difference initially, outwardly, but eventually the fruit will show & God will deal w/it in His time, in His way.

\* But check this out. Cain & Abel had the same parents, same godly upbringing & instruction in love & righteousness. They were taught the importance of knowing God, serving God from the heart. **But ultimately, they chose 2 different directions. Cain chose the way of evil; he murdered his brother & then lied about it ("I don't know where he is?") Satan was a liar & a murderer from the beginning (Jn 8:44).**

Here's my point. Not every child who chooses to walk the wrong path is the result of poor parenting. Sometimes it may be. But we err to presume categorically. Sometimes parent's beat themselves up, "Where did I go wrong? Where did I fail?" As parents we all fail in innumerable ways. Some think that when they see a child choose the wrong path, they just aren't being parented properly. – **Cain & Abel serve to teach us that godly parenting can only take a child so far. We can do all that we can to "set them up for success" to lead them into a spiritual heritage from the Lord. But ultimately, each individual is accountable *personally* to choose to surrender to J.C. \***

**Vs 13**

\* The *shock*, the *surprise* shouldn't be when the *world* hates you. "I'm such a good person, always trying to help people, loving on people, I don't understand, why these people hate me!" Have you read the beatitudes? Jesus speaks about the attitudes that should be in our lives. Humility, meekness, righteousness, mercy, purity of heart, how that we should be peaceable... & You think, "Who wouldn't love a person like that? This person should win a Nobel peace prize or something!" Then He says, "& Btw, that the kind of person who's going to be persecuted, but you're in good company." & You think, "Wait, what!? How does *that* work?"

Look no further than to J.C. Himself, the very embodiment of each of those things & how did the world treat Him? Why? Because your purity shines a light on their perversion.

Your humility shows their pride. Your mercy makes known their cruelty & self-centeredness. Your love for righteousness exposes their love for wickedness/sinfulness & they don't like that. So, they can either turn from their sin, or turn on you...

“Do not marvel, when the *world* hates you.” The shock, the surprise is when hatred is expressed w/in the body of Christ! It ought not be! You're *family!* Love is characteristic of the one who has been born again. *Hatred* is the characteristic of the unregenerate, the one who is of the world... \*

### Vs 14-15

John is all about those “litmus tests” isn't he? How can you *know* you've been born again? God doesn't want you 2<sup>nd</sup> guessing your salvation. He wants you to have confidence in Him & in His word. A basic sign of being born again is a love for the people of God.

If you don't have a love for the family of God, the body of Christ. Then you do well to make your calling & election sure. It's not inappropriate to question if you've been born again... You're in the place of being dead in sin before God, you need to “pass over” to life in Christ.

Btw, I love the continuity of scripture. & The more you study it, the more you pick up on it. You even begin to get an idea of what was perhaps in someone's mind when they wrote what they did. (Of course, we can't be certain of what was happening in a person's mind, but the continuity is there.) Jesus had instructed the disciples again & again of the importance of love. \* Jesus had told them, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, in that you love one another.” Someone should be able to look at our lives, the attitudes & affections that we have toward other believers & know that we belong to Jesus. “This guy, this gal must be a follower of Christ, you can just tell by how much they love other Christians.”

I'm just going to be honest w/you, before I surrendered my heart to J.C., before I was born again by the Spirit of God, I really had no desire to be around Christians. In fact, Christians kind of got on my nerves. Always talking about God, never (I thought) having any fun, killjoys, fun-suckers, awkward conversations & always making me feel bad about what I wanted to do... (At least, that's how I perceived it, the truth is that it wasn't the person doing anything, it was the conviction of the Holy Spirit pressing in on my life revealing to me that I'm in sin... but I *wanted* to be in sin, so I wanted to get away from the Christian & the conviction.)

But something happens when you raise the white flag & unconditionally surrender before J.C. Old things pass away, all things are made new, & now you (for some reason) find yourself *wanting* to be around other believers. There's just something refreshing, renewing, encouraging & edifying about it. *There's joy in it... the tables turn, now it's uncomfortable being around people who are always talking about how they're pressing into their sin, they're flaunting it, boasting in it, bragging about it & I just don't want to hear it, I prefer to be being built up by my brothers & sisters in Christ!*

Ladies and Gentlemen, that's not natural! It's supernatural & it bears witness that you have passed from death (which is the natural state of man, dead in sin) to life (alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord). \*

*& John continues to cut it straight, no ambiguity or uncertainty. Earlier (2:7-11) he told us that loving the brethren was a matter of light & darkness. Here he takes us even deeper, it's a matter of life & death!*

"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer & you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him..." Btw, hatred can be shown passively, just as readily as it can be shown actively.

*& Again, I'm not saying that hurt isn't real, offenses don't happen or any of that. But even if you've been battered & bruised by some brother or sister (unloving brethren as it were). There will be something in you, drawing you back to fellowship w/the body of Christ. You love the brethren.*

The natural/normal experience of the unsaved (Titus 3:3) is "hateful & hating one another." When you're born again, God takes up residence in your heart/life through the Person of His Holy Spirit... God, is *love*. "Hateful & hating one another" is not the "norm" for the believer. We're to *love* one another. To share the message of light/life in Christ Jesus w/others. We want to see others pass from death to life.

*The natural progression of man is to life to death, Jesus turns that around. He takes us out of death & gives us life, eternal life. It's the result of turning from our sin & trusting in Him. I'd encourage you to not leave here today w/out eternal life abiding in you. If you've not given your life to Christ, raise the white flag of unconditional surrender before the Lord today, & you'll never be the same, in Jesus name... \**

**Prayer Points:**

God we thank You for the clarity & the simplicity of Your Word. For sharing with us & showing to us the characteristics that will be evident in our lives as Your children so that there's no confusion. Give us the grace to let go of bitterness, of hurt, to walk in forgiveness, humility & love for the glory of Your name.

If you're here & you don't know J.C. you've not given your life to Christ, you haven't passed from death to life, take that trip today. Don't leave here w/unsettled business between you & God. God loves you, Christ died for you & new life is available to you by His grace through faith in Him...