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# *The Epistles of John*

“Get Ready to Duck”

## **1 John 3:11-18**

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**B**elievers, at least in the United States, have not really understood the concept of being hated because of the Lord's work. For many years, it had been socially acceptable to be part of Christendom. And while many of those involved in local churches were probably not believers, at least it was considered of value to be attending a church in the community.

*But it appears that this general acceptance is waning. And while this isn't comfortable, nevertheless it is a good thing. Society becomes more liberal, actually morally degenerate, consequently those who truly desire to be obedient are standing against society's values.*

*This stand isn't just taken against issues like abortion, pornography, and euthanasia. For example, Christians are fighting against the values clarification programs in schools. Believers are trying to be obedient to the Lord and be the salt and light within society.*

*As a result, believers and social engineers are drawing further and further apart. Christians are being perceived as impediments to what these people want to do in the culture. And, I hope that we are. We constantly remind people of God's definition of family, or morality, of the appropriate way to raise children, and live sexually. We are reminders that God has absolute standards, which is what they hate most of all, for society in general no longer accepts absolutes. In fact most of what we stand for is in direct opposition to how people want to live. I guess we better get ready to duck.*

*And society is fighting back. Children are attacked for trying to present their Christian views. The laws are being used to try to tax, attack and make ineffective the work of the church and Christians. And frequently, even society recognizes the difference between those who call themselves Christians while, as the false teachers of John's day, living anyway they want, and those committed to biblical orthodoxy. It is those, us I hope, that they truly do hate. The unrighteous correctly perceive the committed Christian as a threat to the society they are trying to create. And, they will do anything they can do to make us impotent.*

*It isn't religion they hate. Look at the acceptance of paganism and Hindu views in the environmental movement. Look at how under the guise of multi-culturalism there is acceptance of polytheism and other teachings that are actually Satanic. But Christianity? No way. It is bigoted, self-righteous and elitist. Christians must be forced to make their sacrifices to the gods of this age. Then they can be allowed to be part of society, as second class citizens.*

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**I Introduction**

**II Love and Hate**

**III Love is ...**

**IV Conclusion**

**Verses 11-15**

**Verses 16-18**

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**I Introduction:** John certainly recognized this problem. The false teachers were trying in their way to subvert the truth of the gospel. And, they were encouraging believers to not be so obsessive, but to live anyway they wanted. And apparently as John and others stood for God's truth, they experienced the hatred that Christ had warned them of. It is these concerns that John is speaking to in this next section of this letter.

One of the most significant changes from the age of Law to the Church Age is the movement from Law and Sacrifice to the Law of Love. The Christian is motivated by God's love, given to us and in turn through us to others.

Christ lived out this truth as He not only gave out the gospel of the kingdom, but as he brought healing and fed the crowds. Jesus saw not only the spiritual needs of the Jews, but their material needs as well. Jesus lived out truth and love in practical actions.

The problem John was dealing with was the teaching that nothing we do matters. How we live isn't an issue. Knowledge in and of itself is the basis of salvation. John in this passage focuses on the place of love and actions in the life of the believer in contrast with the nonbeliever.

**II Love and Hate: Verse 11:** John returns to one of the basic calls for Christians. They are to love one another. His readers had heard this from the beginning. I would assume that he is referring to the beginning of their exposure of the Gospel. The message of salvation is the account of God's love of mankind. And, it is the hope of the availability of love one for another. The message of salvation is the promise of relationship, relationship with God and with brothers and sisters in the Lord.

**Verse 12:** The love of believers one for another, is contrasted with the hatred that Cain had for his brother. John makes it clear that the basis of Cain's hatred was his own evil nature. In what way does Cain represent the actions of the world? And when he was confronted with the righteous quality of his brother he hated Abel and slew him.

*“In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering.” (Genesis 4:4).*

And isn't hatred and murder the place where it all began? Christ said of Satan:

*“... He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).*

The real spiritual battle is the stand for truth in the church, truth expressed in love.

This passage doesn't show exactly what was going on. Abel offered a sacrifice of an animal, a blood sacrifice. In contrast Cain offered up produce. Abel's sacrifice was accepted, Cain's rejected. But Cain could have gone to Abel and traded for an animal. Cain however acted as if God should consider Himself lucky that Cain offered anything. Confronted with Abel's righteousness, instead of turning to God, Cain became murderously angry and killed him.

**Verse 13:** John uses this example to contrast the difference between the righteous and the unrighteous. When brought up against righteousness, evil is forced to face itself. As a response, evil hated goodness. John tells his readers that they shouldn't be surprised if they are hated by the world. As Jesus said,

*“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first” (John 15:18).*

Remember that when John speaks of the world, he is talking about the system ruled by Satan. And the children of Satan hate the children of God. It is important to remember that when we serve God as he desire we will experience interference. If we are truly committed to obedience, we will accept this as simply a fact of life.

**Verses 14-15:** *What is the fruit of the believer versus the fruit of the lost?* One contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous is love of God and others, versus hate of God and His children. A second difference that John identifies is spiritual condition. When we accept Christ, we move from life to death.

*“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24).*

John identifies the proof of our life: it is the love we demonstrate. This is in contrast with the unbeliever who is dead. And the proof of this is the sin of Cain, hatred of his brother.

*“Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness” (1 John 2:9).*

Notice by the way, John says that anyone who does not love “remains”... In other words if God comes into the life of the unbeliever, he will love and he will no longer be dead.

Remember the words of Jesus during His sermon on the mount?

*“But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell” (Matthew 5:22).*

It seems that the ultimate testimony of rebellion against God is hatred of one's brother.

**Verses 16-19:** But it isn't enough to not hate your brother. Remember while hatred is proof of unrighteousness, its absence isn't proof of righteousness. *What is proof of relationship with God?* Love for a brother is a demonstration of God's presence in your life. *Give an example of how you can demonstrate God's love in your life.*

John gives some specific examples of how to care for one another. First he shows us the ultimate example of godly love. Christ laid down His life for us. He gave up everything to restore us to fellowship with the Father. And that is to be the primary motivation behind our walk. We are to help others come to a saving knowledge of Christ. And then, we must come along side and help them grow in that relationship.

But caring for one another, brothers and sisters, means much more than that. It means that we need to do what we are Abel to help with spiritual, emotional and physical needs. The specific example John gives is the having of material possessions and sharing them with another brother who is in need.

Additionally, he makes it clear that words aren't enough. Actions must be included if we truly love. This is similar to what James said .

***“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?...But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do....You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?...As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead” (James 2:14, 18, 20, 26).***

John once again makes his argument against the false teachers. He reiterates that it does matter how we live if we claim to be believers. The reality of God in our lives is shown by our works, and are works done not from duty, but from love. And all this must be done in truth.

It not only matters what we do, but we must hold to truth. John's implicative statement to the readers, is that the false teachers are guilty of manipulation of truth, and all that they do is of the spirit of anti-Christ.

**Conclusion:** It seems to me that the most important thing we can take from this passage isn't that we are going to be hated. While we are not to be surprised, this isn't to be the primary focus of our lives.

We hear so much today about the attack of society on the church. A lot of discussion is carried on about how we can fight back and protect ourselves. Because we live in the representative form of government and therefore have appropriate ways to affect law, we can try to slow some of these attacks. In fact, considering many of the issues that concern us do have a detrimental effect on society, we have an obligation as salt and light to try to slow down the process of corruption.

But our primary responsibility isn't to try to instill Christians values into a fallen society. John's point is that the distinguishing characteristic between the believer and nonbeliever is our love versus their hate. We must love even those that hate us.

***“But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,” (Matthew 5:44).***

Our responsibility is to present God's truth, that is, the message of salvation to a fallen world. And that truth must be presented in love. Remember that John called us to love by what we do. If the gospel is the message of love,

***“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16),***

... then it must be presented with love. — Yes we must make it clear that people need to be saved because of their sins.

***“ ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”...“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 3:23, 6:23).***

But, at the same time we need to have God’s love for the lost, being pained at the thought of their eternal destiny. The message of sin and damnation should be given out of love and pain, with the desire to help the lost escape their future. The message of judgment shouldn’t be preached judgmentally, but with a spirit of compassion. No matter how wicked someone is, by our perception, our desire should be for their salvation and the escaping of damnation. Remember what Paul said to the believer in the church at Corinth.

***“ Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).***

As we give out the message of salvation, let us do so from the position that we too were dead in our sins, and therefore we have no right to judge. Instead, let us present the message of hope and love, God’s desire to save the lost from His soon coming judgment.

In the final analysis we won’t be used to save anyone by our biblical orthodoxy, as vital as this is. Our witness isn’t dependent on the fact our life may look Christian. After all the Pharisees were certainly religiously orthodox, and a number of cults “look” really good.

The factor in our lives that will turn others towards Christ is the real presence of God’s love in our lives. As we reach out unselfishly towards those who hate us, allowing God’s *agapé* to flow through us, people will be confronted by the supernatural presence of the Lord in our lives. Being exposed to God in that way can cause them to react with either hatred, or openness to the moving of the Holy Spirit. They will react with hatred because of a heart that is rebellious against God. Or, they will react with acceptance because of the moving of the Spirit. Remember God is responsible for results. We are responsible for loving.

And so we are called to move in love regardless of the response of the person we are moving toward. This is why John says don’t be surprised by the world’s hatred. When surprised we tend to respond in like manner. When prepared we will depend on the Lord to move in love.

The most unusual aspect of being Christian is not demanding justice or fairness from the lost, but instead moving with God’s love towards them, desiring only that which is best for them. And by doing such, we truly fulfill the command of Christ.

***“ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,” (Matthew 5:44).***

Yes, stand for the truth at all costs, but as you stand, stand in prayer for those who come against you. And in such manner you will please the Lord, and force the individual to be confronted by the living God.

***“If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you” (Proverbs 25:21-22).***

The second point we need to take from this passage is that our responsibility to care for one another means that we are to use what the Lord provides for us for others as well. Whether this means we give of money, possessions, time, etc., what we have from the Lord is to be used for Him.

***“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:35-40).***

### ***I Shall Not Pass Again This Way.***

*The bread that bringeth strength I want to give;  
The water pure that bids the thirsty live.  
I want to help the fainting, day by day.  
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.  
I want to give the oil of joy for tears,  
The faith to conquer crowding doubts and fears,  
Beauty for ashes may I give alway.  
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.  
I want to give good measure running o'er,  
And into angry hearts I want to pour  
The answer soft that turneth wrath away.  
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.  
I want to give to others hope and faith;  
I want to do all that the Master saith;  
I want to do aright from day to day.  
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.*

~ ANONYMOUS

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**I Introduction:**

**II Love and Hate: Verse 11:**

**Verse 12:**

*(Genesis 4:4; John 8:44)*

**Verse 13:**  
*(John 15:18)*

**Verses 14-15:**  
*(John 5:24, 2:9; Matthew 5:22)*

**III Love is ...: Verses 16-18:**  
*(James 2:14, 18, 20, 26).*

**IV Conclusion:**  
*(Matthew 5:44; John 3:16; Romans 3:23, 6:23; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Matthew 5:44; Proverbs 25:21-22; Matthew 25:35-40)*

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Personal Application: Last week we talked about ministering within the body. This week, let's focus on ministering to our neighbors, showing God's love and mercy to them. Is there someone you can care for this week?

**Prayer for the Week: Lord, fill me with love for lost, ministering to them holistically, materially as well as spiritually. In Jesus' name, amen.**