
The Epistles of John

“Love Can Mean Saying ‘No’” ~ Part 2

2 John 7-13

God will bless those who give.” His white suit reflected the spotlight, giving him the appearance of glory and purity. “We read in the Old Testament,” he went on, “how God promised to meet the material needs of all who obey Him. You are told to give to the work of the ministry, and therefore God promises you that if you give to his work here at the “Light and Prosperity Ministries” that He will make you rich. After all, you’re children of God and He certainly doesn’t want His obedient children to walk around in rags. No, He wants you to have furs, pools, Cadillacs, anything you want.”

“I know that God has laid it on the heart of ten of you to each send a thousand dollars. And when you send your money, also send your prayer requests and we’ll pray over each and every one. Remember that God will answer every prayer. He told me just this morning that some of you aren’t sending enough to aid the ministry so, no money, no answers. Remember, when you hear me, you hear God, so give and God will give.”

The old woman was down to her last ten dollars and should have gone to the store for food today. “But the Reverend Dinero said dat God was unhappy with me, cause I ain’t sent nough money. I know dat the Reverend love me cause he say so, and he speaks for God. I guess I’ll send this last ten and I know God’ll bless me with much more. I guess the reason He ain’t for the money I already sent is cause I don’t have nough faith.”

I Introduction

II Antichrist Messages

III Closing Remarks

IV Conclusion

Verses 7-11

Verses 12-13

I Introduction: The walk of the Christian is to reflect the sacrificial love of God. We are to be looking for opportunities to express God’s love to those around us. In point of fact it is the demonstration of that love that is the clearest witness of the presence of God in the midst of a fallen world. The church, and by extension individual believers, is the visible presence of Christ until His return.

But the call to love has been abused on numerous occasions. When we are discriminating against sinful behavior, individuals will accuse us of being unloving. Christians are condemned for being unloving when, in expressing the truth of Scripture, they state it is only through Christ anyone can be saved. To reject Christ is to not escape an eternity in hell. To express this is unloving. Finally, some will attack God outright, saying a loving God will not judge anyone.

Sometimes we allow this type of manipulation to cause us to compromise. We shave truth to avoid hurting someone. We allowed ourselves to be coerced into doing something we really shouldn't. After all, if we don't give in we aren't loving. But the point of John's second epistle is to encourage us through an understanding that to love isn't synonymous with always saying yes. "Love can mean saying 'No!'"

John is concerned with the manipulative behavior of some false prophets. These individuals presented themselves as believers. But, because of their teaching, it was clear they weren't. They, using their claim of being part of the body, were endeavoring to live off the love of believers.

II antichrist Messages: Verse 7: Again John identifies the incarnation as the touchstone upon which the validity of a confession of faith is grounded. Those who come in Christ's name while rejecting His incarnation are not believers. Stott notes that John doesn't say that these individuals teach against the incarnation, they simply don't teach about it at all.¹ This is a subtle practice of many false teachers today. They reject the incarnation, but they don't let tell anyone. They endeavor to hid the truth of their belief, knowing that it would expose them as heretics. And as we examine their words carefully, this can be discovered.

John warns that these people are in the world. And that is certainly true today. This is the message of the cults. And unfortunately, this message is being expressed by some within the mainstream of Christendom.

John, who apparently wasn't known for being subtle, stated these individuals were liars and antichrists. These people are out to sow discord among believers, leading them away from the truths of Scripture. They are also endeavoring to mislead the lost, preventing them from accepting saving truth.

Verse 8: John was also concerned that believers could lose what they had striven for, based on how they responded to these individuals. *What does he refer to, when warning not to lose what we have worked for?* The loss here is related to rewards. Remember that all we do will be tested based on whether or not it was done for Christ. Paul put it this way:

“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames” (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Even believers can be mislead. And when responding to the false prophets, in spite of their false teachings, even with good intent, their work is for naught. Our unfortunate old woman

¹ Stott, John R. W., The Epistles of John, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1983, p. 209.

may have sent her last ten to the Rev. Dinero, and her motive may have even been good, though it seemed questionable, but it was meaningless. Dinero was a false prophet, and the support of the work of this type of antichrist will be burned up. God does judge the motive and doctrine of the teacher. And rejection of God's truth condemns one, regardless of how much "love" is thrown around.

Verse 9: Our daily relationship with God is dependent on our holding fast to the truth He has given us. This is what is referred to as abiding. We will not see God working in our lives if we are not functioning in His truth. John isn't referring to an eternal relationship, which is based on the work of the cross. He is talking about our walk. We know this because he is writing to believers.

John is warning about those that run ahead of the teaching of Christ. This is somewhat unclear but Stott identifies the concept this way:

"They had indeed 'gone ahead'. They had advanced so far that they had left God behind them!"

"Many want God without Jesus Christ. They say they believe in God, but see no necessity for Jesus." ²

Verse 10: Now the specific problem that John was concerned with had to do with the practice of hospitality. How does the requirement for hospitality fit into all this? During this period Christian teachers traveled from area to area. The local believers would put them up while they were in the area. This was appropriate, but John didn't want the local believers to mistakenly take in the false prophets, whose primary concern was taking in believers.

Verse 11: The point John makes here is that to even assist someone who is antichrist is becoming an accessory to the evil being done. When we give support or comfort to the false teachers, we advance their work. Those who try to come up with all kinds of arguments to justify their support of those presenting false doctrine don't seem to understand that they might as well be propagating the false doctrine themselves. Jesus Himself said,

"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters"
(Matthew 12:30).

Those who deny the incarnation, no matter how much they talk about Christ, are against Him. And even believers can work against Christ when they assist those who function in the spirit of antichrist.

It is vital that we never compromise truth. We must judge all that we hear and see and discern if it is of God or of Satan. Ignorance is no excuse. As we saw in the previous letter, we are individually responsible to stand for and understand truth.

"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

² Ibid., p .211

John makes it clear that believers can advance the work of Satan, by supporting, no matter how ignorantly, those who carry out his work. Where we have been supporting someone whose testimony was sound, but later turns from the truth, we are not accountable. Of course we must no longer give aid after learning the truth.

Last week I gave you an example of a woman who left a substantial amount of money in her will to a local church. At the time she made the will the church was relatively sound. She gave with good intent. The money was so substantial that it has aided the church in its work for many years. Unfortunately today that church is so far from truth that it is pathetic. And the good Christian woman's money is still being used today. I believe though that since she gave at a time when the church was serving the Lord, the fact that it isn't sound today doesn't invalidate her gift.

But second, when we do aid the antichrists we damage our relationship with the Lord, and risk losing that which we have done for him. The loss isn't of salvation, but a loss of rewards.

In summary, John's warnings to believers can be identified in two simple statements. (1) Don't be deceived by false teachers. (2). Don't give aid and comfort to the enemy.

III Closing Remarks: And so, John closes his second epistle. He notes he has a lot more he wants to talk to them about, but he wants to say these things face-to-face. Apparently, his concern over this issue took precedence and therefore couldn't wait for his coming to them.

What is the source of John's joy. How can we find it? And John's joy came from fellowship with fellow believers. His sharing with them in person was much more satisfactory than simply sending them a letter.

He completes this epistle by sending greetings from others. And taking into consideration, that we have considered the lady to whom this letter was sent was a local church, then it is safe to assume that the children referred to here are believers in another local congregation who have close ties to the recipient church of this letter.

Conclusion: A very practical way that we carried out this need for care was demonstrated by the board of our old church on the peninsula. When anyone representing a ministry came to us, asking to speak to the body, we had to have a referral from someone we knew. It wasn't enough that they presented a doctrinal statement that was sound. Either we had to have heard them ourselves, or they had to be recommended by someone we trusted. Sure, we probably turned away some who were sound, but our responsibility was to protect the flock and we would be held accountable if we allowed a false prophet a platform from which to speak. We needed to be wise. As Jesus said:

“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

We are to use godly common sense. We are to think. And we are to act out of that kind of judgment. *Can you think of any specific examples in your own experience that reflects the wisdom needed to say no?*

Just as with First John, the message of Second John is the exercise of Truth in Love. As these two are lived out together, then we will not be in any danger of losing our rewards, for working hand-in-hand with antichrists. John calls us to separate ourselves from those who do not do the work of Christ. This is not a call to reject those with whom we have differences over issues that do not effect salvation. But the foundational doctrines of Christianity are not negotiable. Paul put it this way:

“I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil” (Romans 16:19).

Shun those who are the enemies of Christ, and sacrificially minister to those who serve Him.

“Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

And one day all confusion will end, “EVEN SO COME LORD JESUS.”

“Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen” (Revelation 1:7).

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I Introduction:

II Antichrist Messages: Verse 7:

Verse 8:
(1 Corinthians 3:15)

Verse 9:

Verse 10:

Verse 11:

(Matthew 12:30; 1 John 4:1)

III Closing Remarks:

IV Conclusion:

(Matthew 10:16; Romans 16:19; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 1:7)

Personal Application: We need to remember to be discerning in both judging truth and those who purport to disseminate it.

Prayer for the Week: Lord, may Your Spirit give me discernment in understanding the teachings I hear. In Christ's name, amen.