

BROTHERLY LOVE IS DOING RIGHTEOUSNESS AND BEING OF GOD

1Jno.3:10b-18

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. By way of introduction to the study of 1Jno.3:10b-18 note that we have been taught by John in previous verses that:
 - a. Continued sonship to God or being of God is a matter of continued spiritual kinship to God by virtue of the habitual practice or righteousness, the doing of righteousness.
 - b. A life of habitual righteousness is the mark of those who are of God, God's children, while the habitual practice of sin marks one as of the devil, or as a child of the devil.
2. In V.10b of our text John returns to the subject of brotherly love, which he first introduced in 1Jno.2:7-11, where he once again teaches that a life of righteousness and being of God is a life of love – a life of brotherly love.
 - a. Previously, in 1Jno.2:7-11, he had emphasized that:
 - (1) “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now,” v.9.
 - (2) “He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him,” v.10.
 - (3) “But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes,” v.11.
 - b. In returning to the subject of brotherly love in our text, John:
 - (1) Affirms the absolute necessity of it if one is to be of God.
 - (2) Offers the practice of it as proof of and the assurance of present spiritual life and sonship with God.
 - (3) And sets forth the nature of love and some of brotherly love's incumbent sacrifices.
3. Therefore, he teaches what our topic suggests: Brotherly Love Is Doing Righteousness And Being Of God.
4. Hence, once again, we are made to understand that one cannot walk in darkness or practice sinning and be in fellowship with God or be of God at the same time. Cf. 1Jno.1:6.

II. DISCUSSION

A. 1st, BROTHERLY LOVE IS A DIVINE NECESSITY, Vv.10,11.

Cf. 1Th.4:9,10; Heb.13:1;1Pet.2:17; 1Cor.12:31-13:3; Rom.13:8.

1. The first clause of V.10b relates to what had just been written in V.10a, the second, expands it and makes it applicable not only to the spiritual, but also to the social side of life in service to God as a Christian.
2. Obviously, the love here is the love one brother or sister in Christ should have for another, and where it does not exist there is an absence of divine parenthood.
3. Therefore, in summing up the criteria which determines the parentage of mere professed believers from sincere obedient believers, John adds brotherly love to the doing (practicing) of righteousness.
 - a. For John, doing righteousness and practicing brotherly love are inseparable.
4. Are we really of God? Are we really God's children? Do we really stand begotten of God? Answer: Only if we love the brethren, V.10b.
 - a. The professed believer who does not do (practice) righteousness is not of God.
 - b. Neither is the professed believer of God who does not love his brother!
 - c. One who would in any way mistreat, abuse, ignore, neglect or take advantage of his brother in Christ is one who does not love his brother and is, therefore, not of God. Cf. 1Cor.13:1-7.
 - d. This is evident, because what such a professed believer thinks and does stands opposed to all God thinks, does and stands for.
 - e. Such things are not of God. Therefore, the one who is guilty of such things is not of God.
 - f. This is not a pleasant thought and is contrary to the thinking and practice of many (cf.1Jno.1:6), but our lives lived after baptism reveal exactly whose child we are – either God's or the devil's. Cf. 1Jno.3:8-10; Also see Rom.6.
5. Also, beginning in V.10 of our text, John, in reality, defines doing (practicing) righteousness, which is divinely necessary, as including brotherly love.
 - a. Note v.10b.
 - b. Note V.12: Cain did not love his brother Abel so he did an unrighteous deed by murdering him.
 - c. Note V.14: The continued practice of brotherly love is proof, or evidence, of the fact that one has passed from death unto life.
 - d. Note V.16: Brotherly love is the righteous act of being willing even to lay down one's own life for the brethren.

- e. Note V.17,18: Brotherly love is the righteous act of showing sincere compassion toward and cheerful giving of one's possessions to supply the needs of one's brother. Cf. 2Cor.8:1-5,8; 2Cor.9:7c; Rom.12:9,10,13; 1Pet.1:22.
 - f. Brotherly love is manifested by reaching out to the brethren in deed and in truth, V.18.
6. Brotherly love is an indispensable feature in the lives of those who are of God, God's children, those begotten of God, i.e., those who stand begotten of God, and is the very message taught when they first received the gospel message, which John had already emphasized in 1Jno.2:7-11.
- a. "For this is the message that..." V.11. More literally, "Because the message is this..."
 - (1) That is, with reference to what has been written in V.10b.
 - (2) Believers had heard this "message" – had been taught this – from their earliest acquaintance with the gospel of Christ.
 - (3) The following N.T. examples prove this beyond a doubt: Ac.2:41-45; 4:32-37; Rom.15:25-27; 2Cor.8:1-5; 1Cor.16:1-3; Eph.4:28; Heb.6:10.
 - b. The gospel of Christ not only saves obedient believers (Mk.16:15,16; Rom.1:16,17; 2Th.1:6-10), but unites them to Christ as brethren in Christ (Heb.2:11,12; Mt.23:8), and produces in them that brotherly love which identifies them as bring of God, bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22,23; Rom.12:9,10).
7. The family likeness is bound to appear; the love of the Father will be reproduced in his children. Cf. Mt.5:43-48.
8. In reality, he who loves not his brother *has no brother to love*, for by his lack of such love he demonstrates that God is not his Father, that he is not of God's family; thus he has no brother in Christ!

B. 2ND, AN EXTREME EXAMPLE ILLUSTRATING THE ABSENCE OF BROTHERLY LOVE, V.12.

- 1. V.8 recorded the beginning of the whole history of sin beginning with the devil, which is in a context of professed believers practicing sin (cf. 1Jno. 6,8,10), which identifies them with the devil, as children of the devil, and of true believers practicing righteousness, which identifies them as being of God, as children of God, Vv.6-10a.
- 2. Then, V.10b adds that practicing brotherly love is one form of doing righteousness and thus being of God; with V.11 reminding us that this

was a vital part of the gospel message they had heard from their earliest acquaintance with it.

3. This has led John to cite a case of one hating his brother; in fact, the first recorded instance of hatred of one's brother, wherein Cain showed his spiritual connection with the Wicked One, which V.12 describes, which is put in contrast with that of V.11, and Cain is offered as an example of what children of God are not to think or do.
4. As we said, the family likeness is bound to appear, whether it be the family of God or of the Wicked One.
5. It was so in the earliest days of human history, and Cain is cited as an extreme example illustrating the need for brotherly love lest we be like him. See Gen.4:1-8.
 - a. Cain proved he was of that Wicked One by killing his brother Abel. Cf. those who sought to kill Jesus, Jno.8:39-44.
 - b. Why did he kill his brother? "Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."
 - (1) He was "doing sin."
 - (2) His brother was "doing righteousness."
 - (3) V.12b is in the form of a question to stress the evil character of the murderer, and to contrast the righteous character of his brother. It emphasized the evil nature of his works in contrast to the righteous nature of Abel's.
 - (4) The word "and" stresses the question itself. Cf. Lk.10:29, where the lawyer tempting Jesus and attempting to justify himself said, "**And** who is my neighbor?"
 - c. His envy, jealousy, and anger moved him to actual murder in spite of God's appeal to him in vv.6,7 to repent, act righteously toward his brother, and obey God's instructions regarding the specified offering. Cf. Heb.11:4; Rom.10:17.
6. Brotherly love neither thinks nor acts as did Cain of O.T. history.
7. The professed believer who truly practices brotherly love will not do the following things with reference to his brother in the Lord: unjustly criticize; backbite; misrepresent; spread rumors about; belittle; attack personally; abuse; gossip or talk about; be envious or jealous of; stand against in an evil manner; intentionally hurt or injure; destroy his reputation; unjustly oppose; ignore; hate or murder.
8. Basic in every unresolved difficulty, dispute, and division between brethren today is the absence of brotherly love.
 - a. Whatever may be the immediate occasion which prompts such, each unresolved difficulty, dispute and division may, in principle,

be traced to the lack of brotherly love and to the resentment which the evil feel toward the righteous.

C. 3RD, IN VIEW OF PAST HISTORY, THE PRESENT WORLD'S HATRED OF THE RIGHTEOUS SHOULD NOT SURPRISE BRETHREN, V.13.

1. The principle of the hostility of the wicked to the righteous, which is nearly as old as the race, is one which John sees still present in the lives of worldly men and still plaguing the righteous in the present world; hence, he adds a word of encouragement in V.13.
2. "Marvel not," i.e., do not be surprised, or astonished, or think it strange, that the world hate you.
3. This verse is a direct echo of the words of Jesus to his chosen disciples during his personal ministry, Jno.15:16-21; 16:1-3,33; 17:14; Lk.6:22,23; 10:16; Mt.10:16-22; Cf. Mt.24:9; Lk.21:17.
4. The word "if," in "if the world hate you," does not introduce a suggestion as to what *might possibly be the case*, but implies the existence of the hatred as a fact. Cf. 2Tim.3:12,13.
5. Cain is an example of it in the early history of the race; and man's subsequent history has been filled with similar examples.
6. In view of this, plus the present warnings of it in the gospel of Christ, don't be surprised, astonished, or think it strange when you experience the same treatment! But be encouraged by words such as those of 1Pet.4:12-16; Rev.2:10.

D. 4TH, WHAT WE KNOW, OR WHAT IS PROVEN, BY THE POSSESSION AND HABITUAL PRACTICE OF BROTHERLY LOVE, V. 14.

1. What we know according to V.14: "We know that we have passed from death unto life," V.14a.
 - a. "Know," – have certain, definite knowledge of this.
 - b. The pronoun "we" is in the emphatic position in V.14 emphasizing the fact whatever the world may do, or feel, toward us, **we** (in contrast with those of the world) **know** (have certain, definite knowledge) that we have passed from a state of death unto life, and so stand in that state.

- c. “Death” here is spiritual death. According to 1Tim.5:6 one who lives in sinful pleasure is spiritually dead while living. Cf. Rom.6:20,21,23a; Eph.2:1.
 - (1) Any person who wastes his life in riotous living is spiritually dead, Lk.15:32.
 - (2) Any person who lives in sin or practices sin is said to be spiritually dead, Eph.2:1-3.
 - (3) Any person who is alienated from God by wicked works is said to be dead, Eph.4:18,19; Col.2:13.
 - (4) Any person who sleeps in sin is spiritually dead, Eph.5:14.
 - (5) Any person who does not have the Son of God is dead, 1Jno.5:11,12.
 - (6) Any person who does great religious works but does the wrong works is dead, Rev.3:1; Cf. Mt.7:21-23.
 - d. “Life” here is spiritual life, being in fellowship with God, having been begotten of God, and still standing in that relationship acceptable to God as his child.
2. Why or how do we know we have passed from death unto life? “Because we love the brethren (or practice brotherly love),” v.14b.
 - a. Brotherly love is evidence of having passed out of death into life. It is proof that we have passed from death over into life.
 - b. John is not saying brotherly love is a condition of salvation from past or alien sins, or the cause of our becoming a child of God.
 - c. Rather, brotherly love is here declared to be the proof or the evidence of the condition here stated; that is, of that which we know; the certainty of **our** knowledge of it; the evidence by which we know that we have passed out of death into life, and that we so stand in that condition.
 3. On the other hand, in the absence of brotherly love, which has been described in previous verses, the state in which the professed believer dwells is death, spiritual death.
 - a. He is not of God, but of the devil – not matter what he claims to the contrary. Cf. 1Jno.1:6.
 - b. His absence of brotherly love is the **sign** of his **abiding, dwelling,** in death. And, in this case, even the **cause** of it!
 4. Note how John has built his case for true believers who continue to have fellowship with God, to be of God, are children of God, and who abide in Jesus Christ, his Son, as opposed to those who say they have fellowship with God while walking in darkness or practicing sin. **TRUE BELIEVERS:**

- a. “Walk in the light, as he is in the light,” 1:7.
 - b. Confess their sins to be forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness, 1:9.
 - c. “Keep his commandments,” 2:4,5.
 - d. “Keep his word,” and walk as Jesus walked, 2:5,6.
 - e. Show they are abiding in the light rather than in darkness by loving the brethren, 2:9,10.
 - f. Do not love the world, neither the things of the world, 2:15.
 - g. “Doeth (habitually practice) righteousness,” 2:29; 3:7.
 - h. Do not practice sinning, 3:6,9.
 - i. Practice brotherly love, 3:10b,11,14.
5. “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death, V.14c.
- a. Spiritual death, that is.
 - b. Spiritual death involves the absence of brotherly love; the abiding presence of brotherly love marks spiritual life.

E. 5TH, FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE FATAL CONSEQUENCE OF HATING A BROTHER IN CHRIST, V.15.

1. The phrase “He that loveth not his brother” (v.14) is followed immediately by the phrase “whosoever hateth his brother” (v.15), which seems to indicate that the two are identical in meaning, showing that in the absence of love there is hate; there can be no middle ground!
 - a. Not loving is hating; it is impossible to avoid one or the other of these opposites; if there is a middle ground, what is it?
 - b. With John’s writings, love and hate, as life and death, light and darkness, mutually exclude each other.
 - c. He who has not and does not practice the one must be regarded as possessing and practicing the other.
 - d. Love, therefore, is the only security against hate.
2. A child of God does not even hate his enemies, much less his brethren in Christ! Cf. Mt.5:43-48.
 - a. Though this should be clearly understood, it is not always. I have heard brethren refer to the president of the U.S. contemptuously and say: “I hate him!”
 - b. It seems some brethren feel they are still acceptable to God even as:
 - (1) They have and even express all kinds of negative feelings against or toward their brethren in the Lord; such as:

feelings of dislike; anger; bitterness; envy; jealousy; unjust disfavor; sourness; resentment; irritability.

(2) They misrepresent, backbite, unjustly condemn their brethren.

3. "Is a murderer," meaning:
 - a. Not that he has actually committed the act of taking another's life by murder.
 - b. Not in the literal sense, and not merely in a moral or spiritual sense.
 - c. One who hates his brother is thereby a would-be – a potential – murderer in the physical sense; for the motive is there though the physical act is not committed, and God judges motives.
 - d. He has exhibited the disposition and spirit of a murderer.
 - e. He has allowed passions to arise in his heart which, when carried to their ultimate ends, result in murder. Cf. Cain, 1Jno.3:12; Gen.4:1-8.
 - f. He may never commit the physical act of murder, but it is not because he lacks the disposition or the spirit of a murderer.
 - (1) Murder is simply hate expressed in an overt act.
 - (2) And when it does not issue in this fashion, it is due to other causes than those which reside in the heart of the hater; it may be because of the lack of opportunity or means, or fear of the physical consequences from civil authorities, or lack of courage on the part of the hater.
4. Cf. what Jesus said in Mt.5:21,22.
 - a. Unjust anger, bitterness and contempt for a brother are just as serious in the Lord's eyes as is murder as far as their danger to the soul of man is concerned. Why?
 - (1) Because the one is guilty of the very same sinful feeling and spirit as the other. And sin is sin!
 - (2) Though the actual murderer reacts differently and more violently, the heart of both the hater and the murderer is the same.
 - b. Men may camouflage or hide from other men what is in their heart; but they can't hide it from God, Num.32:23; Heb.4:12,13; Psa.139:1-12. God knows the heart, looks upon and judges by the heart!
5. Note the fatal consequences of hating a brother, V.15b.
 - a. He has no promise of eternal life because he is not of God; he isn't walking in the light, but in darkness; he is abiding in death; he isn't

- abiding in either the Father or the Son; he hath neither the Father nor the Son. See 1Jno.2:9,11; 5:11,12;2Jno.9.
- b. Obviously, spiritual life and spiritual death cannot abide in the same soul at the same time.
 - (1) Where hate is, there is death.
 - (2) Where there is death, there can be no life.
 - c. Other phrases of similar impact are found in the context.
 - (1) He is not of God who loveth not his brother, V.10.
 - (2) He that loveth not his brother abideth in death, V.14.
 - d. While there is forgiveness in this life for the murderer who repents (Ac.2:23,36-38,41; 7:58; 8:1; 9:1,2; 1Tim.1:13-15); yet, for the destiny of him who remains in his sin and guilt, see Lk.13:3; Rev.21:8.

F. 6TH, BROTHERLY LOVE'S INCUMBENT SACRIFICES LOVINGLY ACCEPTED, Vv.16-18.

- 1. V.16.
 - a. By Jesus' ultimate sacrifice of himself for us, we have come to know, understand love in its greatest, its highest expression, its greatest possible proof. Cf. Jno.3:16; Jno.15:13; Rom.5:8; Jno.10:11,17,18.
 - b. We have thereby become acquainted with love, with the fact of it, with its real nature, meaning and action, from having seen it displayed by Jesus Christ in his death for us.
 - c. Whereas hatred found its expression in Cain's act of anger in taking the life of his brother; brotherly love (Heb.2:11,12) found its expression in the act of Jesus lovingly giving up his life for us.
 - d. Perceiving this great sacrificial love, those practicing brotherly love remember when he did it and why he did it.
 - (1) He who knew no sin died for our sins, 2Cor.5:21; 1Cor.15:3; Gal.1:4.
 - (2) He did it when we were without strength, totally unable to help ourselves or to save ourselves without his sacrifice, Rom.5:6.
 - (3) He did it when we were yet ungodly, Rom.5:6.
 - (4) He did it when we were yet sinners, Rom.5:8.
 - (5) He did it when we were enemies of God, rebelling, neglecting, ignoring, denying, rejecting God, Rom.5:10.
 - (6) He did it to keep us from perishing, Jno.3:16.

- e. In spite of all this, both the Father and the Son made this the greatest loving sacrifice for us.
 - f. In V.16 the point is this: Those truly perceiving the great sacrificial love of Jesus will love their brethren just like he loved them, and be willing to make even the extreme, ultimate sacrifice for them if and when necessary.
 - g. Those who lovingly practice brotherly love, perceiving the love of God and of him who laid down his life for them, realize brotherly love's incumbent sacrifices as set forth in:
 - (1) V.16b.
 - (2) V.17.
 - (3) V.18.
 - h. No Christian should speak readily of his love for his brethren in Christ unless he has given serious thought to the possibility that he would be willing, if need be, to show that love as Jesus Christ showed his, by giving up his life for them --- indeed, by regarding it as his duty to do so under certain circumstances!
2. V.17
- a. Brotherly love also has compassion for and willingly, sincerely and cheerfully gives to meet the needs of his brethren. Cf. 2Cor.8:1-5; Deut.15:7,8.
 - b. This verse is a question, but the answer is clearly seen; which is: the love of God does not exist within a professed believer who is unwilling to supply his needy brother with the necessities of life; the means to sustain his physical life.
 - (1) No matter what he professes, thinks, or argues, if he refuses his needy brother he does not possess the love of God; i.e., love for God.
 - (2) Here and elsewhere in the N.T. we are taught the most important lesson that it is impossible to separate theory from practice, or faith from works, or the obedience of faith. See Jas.2:14-26.
 - (3) Ac.20:33-35; Rom.12:10-13; Gal.6:10; 1Tim.6:17-19; Heb.6:10; 13:16.
 - c. The "But" suggests that it would be a mistake to regard the manifestation of brotherly love as consisting solely of great and noble deeds such as laying down one's life for a brother in Christ.
 - (1) The greater includes the less.
 - (2) In an argument from the greater to the less, John shows, in the application of the principle taught in V.16, that if a

brother's welfare should require that we give up our life for him, we surely ought to make those smaller sacrifices involving material things.

(3) A refusal to make even such comparatively minor sacrifices is to prove that the love of God does not abide in us!

d. Seldom, if ever, will we as Christians be called upon to so sacrifice our life, or even risk giving it, for our brethren.

(1) But we may have frequent opportunity and need to manifest brotherly love in less extreme ways, as in V.17, by sharing what we have of this world's goods with brethren who are unable to supply their own needs.

(2) Brethren who perceive the love of God and who have the love of God abiding in them will lovingly accept this duty as one of brotherly love's incumbent sacrifices.

3. V.18

a. I would say that most brethren have some feelings for a brother in the Lord when they see him suffering or in need. And most brethren will talk about them and express concern for the needy and suffering brethren.

(1) But as Vv.17,18 imply, some would not; and some would be insincere and hypocritical about it.

b. For instance, with some it might be that if the needy brother was not loved by them or had done some evil against them, then their feelings may change, with them no longer feeling compassion and no longer being ready to reach out and comfort or help. Their attitude might become:

(1) "Well, he deserved it."

(2) "He is being paid back."

(3) "God is judging him for his evil doing."

(4) "He's reaping what he has sowed."

(5) "He could better himself if he tried."

c. to love only those brethren who manifest a love for us is to love only in theory and in speech. It is not loving as the Lord loved.

d. Or some professed believers might be too selfish to love a brother enough to make the sacrifice of supplying his physical needs. "Oh, yes, I love God and the brethren, too, but..!"

e. It is love "in deed and in truth" that is expected from a child of God toward his brethren in Christ, not a pious, hollow, empty, hypocritical claim of such love.

- (1) Let us not love in word **only**, neither with tongue **alone**; but let us **also** love “in deed and in truth.”
- (2) It is right to express our love for brethren in word, but not in word only!
- (3) John forbids the mere babble of brotherly love, where neither the word nor the tongue is attended by the fruits of genuine brotherly love.
- (4) To love in deed is set forth in contrast to loving with word; it shows how what was to some extent genuine, but did not go far enough, is to be carried out in fullness.
- (5) “And in truth” is set in contrast with “with the tongue”; it speaks of what is genuine instead of what is false.
- (6) But not only so, to love in truth is expressed in deeds of love, wrought not to one’s praise, nor even with the mere idea of doing good, but genuinely in the interests of the one on whose behalf the love is shown and to God’s glory. Cf. Mt.5:16; 2Cor.9:11-13.

III. CONCLUSION

1. In view of Vv.10b-18 surely we can see and appreciate:
 - a. What brotherly love is.
 - b. How brotherly love is manifested.
 - c. What we know about our spiritual condition when brotherly love is habitually practiced; also, when the practice of brotherly love is absent.
 - d. How important brotherly love it.
 - e. The incumbent sacrifices of brotherly love.
 - f. That brotherly love is doing righteousness and being of God.
2. How grateful we should be that we have been brought under the influence of God through Jesus Christ by means of the gospel of Christ by which the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts and motivates us to the habitual practice of brotherly love imitating the example Jesus set for us!