



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

A Study of Contrasts (1 John 3:11-18)

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, April 23, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, April 23, 8:30 PM in Office #301**
(Speaker Pro-Tem's office)

INTRODUCTION

According to Jesus, there are only two types of people in the world: “He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters” (Matthew 12:30). There are none who are neutral. There are no “Switzerlands” in regard to a position concerning Christ.

The Apostle John said the same thing using different terms. He wrote that there are only two types of people in the world: those who are children of God and those who are children of the devil (1 John 3:10). There is no third category. There is no mixed group such as labeled today by some as a “carnal Christian”—who may be defined as ones who have made Christ their savior but have not taken Him as Lord (in other words, they want to be saved, but they do not want to obey).

John also wrote that the differences between the two groups are obvious. The practice of righteousness shows that one group is to be considered the children of God. The continual practice of sinful living is the trademark of the children of the devil.

Today’s society would think this is quite a harsh and judgmental stereotype held by John; to think someone who practices sin is a child of the devil. It may be seen that people like Hitler, Lenin, Pol Pot and a number of the terrorists and criminals are obviously sons of the devil.

But one must remember that God looks at sin as it has been revealed to us in Scripture. He does not view sin in the fluctuating way that people on earth view sin. God sees wrong living as rebellion, turning aside, missing the mark, a moral mutiny attempting to usurp His authority over His creation. The little things that people may see as “not all that bad” are considered as an act of offense against the holy, sovereign Creator of the Universe. Therefore, in

the previous section of his letter, John reminded his readers that sin is absolutely incompatible with God and the things of God (1 John 3:4-10).¹

John continued his compare/contrast in the next part of his letter.

1 John 3:11-18 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; ¹²not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous. ¹³Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. ¹⁵Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

John highlighted three contrasts between the children of the devil and the children of God: a contrast in characteristics, in examples and in conditions.

A CONTRAST IN CHARACTERISTICS

The Contrast: The child of the devil is known as one who hates. The child of God is known by love.

John has already discussed in his letter three different tests of a person’s claim to know God. There is the moral test of obeying God’s commands, the social test of loving others, and the doctrinal test of having right beliefs about Jesus. If one’s claim about knowing God (or claim to “walk in the light”, “have fellowship with God”) is true, it will be seen in these areas.

John elaborated in this section on the second test of loving others. And he is quite clear: the person who is a child of God will love; the child of the devil will hate.

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, OFFICE #301

TRUMAN BUILDING: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, 4TH FLOOR CAFETERIA

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

Missouri

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This hatred is found in various forms in this section. In verses 12 & 15, it is seen in murder; verse 13 in the world's reaction to believers; verses 14 & 17 in not showing love to one's brother. The simplest definition would be the "absence of love"—the very thing shown to and should be shown by the people of God.

But even in this passage "hate" can be seen on various levels. On one level it is seen as not caring for the needs of a brother. It is seen in the way the world reacts to the believers. And it is seen in Cain's violent act upon his brother.

"Hate" is another term or concept which one needs to be directed by Scripture and not by the vacillating ideas of one's culture or own heart. Disregard for another person is "hate" in the eyes of God; thus, one who hates is considered by God to be a "murderer" (3:15).

Donald Burdick wrote "Hatred is the desire to get rid of someone, whether or not one has the nerve or the occasion to perform the act."² And this aptly defines the attitude and pattern of the child of the devil. They do not care for their brother (for example: "I wish he would just go away"), they hate the children of God (seen throughout biblical and post biblical history) and they murder (as in Cain and those like him throughout all of time).

ONE MAN'S HATRED LED TO ANOTHER MAN'S UNDESERVED DEATH. ONE GOD'S LOVE LED TO MANY PEOPLE'S UNDESERVED LIFE.

The contrast is found in the children of God. They are characterized by love. This has already been addressed by John in this letter and will be further fleshed out in later sections. This love is an *agape* love. *Agape* love is a distinct love which is seen in the giver's deliberate choice to care for the welfare of the recipient; regardless of the recipient's worthiness or willingness to receive it.

Agape love can be understood as an attitude. It is the attitude of God the Father toward the Son (John 17:26). It is also God's attitude toward mankind (John 3:16) and the believer's attitude toward Him and other humans (John 13:34; 2 Peter 1:7). *Agape* is also used to describe the attribute of love in God (1 John 4:8).

Agape love is definitely seen in its actions. It is not primarily motivated by feelings, although feelings can be involved. It is evidenced by the giver's action of care to the receiver. "It does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those from whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all."³

This is why John encouraged his readers to not love with word or speeches, but with action and in truth (3:18).

A CONTRAST IN EXAMPLES

The Contrast: Cain saw the righteousness in his brother and murdered him. Jesus saw the sin of people and gave His life for them.

The examples used by John to illustrate the differences between the children of the devil and children of God could be not be further apart. In his only reference to the Old Testament, John used Cain as an example of one who did not exhibit love toward his brother. Moses recorded in Genesis:

Genesis 4:3-8 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

The Apostle explained that the motive behind Cain's brutal, murderous act was that "his deeds were evil and his brothers' were righteous" (1 John 4:12). Cain saw that Abel's sacrifice was accepted and his own was not (there are various understandings as to the reason). Abel did nothing to Cain. But Cain's hatred and jealousy led him to slay Abel. "Jealousy—hatred—murder is a natural and terrible sequence."⁴

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In stark contrast, John used Jesus Christ as an example of real *agape* love (3:16). Unlike Cain, Jesus was offended, hated, beaten, lied about, and sinned against by those who rejected Him. But instead of hating and killing the offenders (even though Jesus had all authority and right to do so), He showed love by using the very act of His murder to be that sacrifice which forgave sinners.

Cain had no authority and no reason to take his brother's life; his hatred led to the brutal slaying. Jesus had all authority and all the reasons needed to justly exercise capital punishment on the rebels who offended Him and His Father; His love, though, bore the punishment due these rebels.

One man's hatred led to another man's undeserved death. One God's love led to many people's undeserved life.

A Side Note: Before moving to the third section, let me say this: My friends, I know that many who are reading this have some great scars from past hurts. Some of you have been hurt deeply by others: someone lied to or about you; a spouse cheated on you, maybe a divorce has occurred; a business partner has deceived you; a friend has stabbed you in the back. For some, these things may have recently taken place.

*My encouragement to you today is this: We can all look back and see people who deserve our hatred and grudges. But if you claim to be a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, bitterness and hatred has no part in your life. No amount of hurt to you is comparable to what you or I have done to God, but He showed the greatest of love by offering forgiveness to us rebels. What does 'forgiveness' mean? That is a whole other lesson, but the gist of it is simply 'not holding it against someone'. We must forgive others. That is one mark of *agape* love which is to be seen in God's children. {Please feel free to contact me, if there is something you want to discuss further}*

A CONTRAST IN CONDITIONS

The Contrast: The child of the devil lives in a state of death. The child of God has died to death and lives in a state of eternal life.

Because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the child of God has been given the gift of eternal life. John wrote that they have passed from a state of death and into a state of life.

While one's first thought may be the length when one is talking about eternal life, it also refers to the condition—the child of God has 'life'. In

other words, it is 'life' which was intended in the very beginning as God created Adam and Eve with whom to walk with them and have a close relationship. A 'life' that was never intended to end in death.

But sin introduced death, separated man from his Creator and ruined the 'life' of life that God intended.

This state of death and separation is that in which the child of the devil is still living; their hatred is a sign that they are living in this wretched state. And this, according to John, is the reason why they hate the children of God (3:13). Just like their example, Cain, and just like their father, the devil, these people hate the things of God and despise his children. Throughout the centuries, nations, cultures, kings, and individuals have persecuted the people of God. John said, "Don't be surprised. They are just acting like their father who has always been opposed to our Father."

THE NEED FOR THE WORLD IS NOT FOR HEROIC ACTS OF MARTYRDOM, BUT FOR HEROIC ACTS OF MATERIAL SACRIFICE. —I.H. MARSHALL

But the child of God, on the other hand, has eternal life. It is a fulfilled life, life with the Creator, a life with purpose, a life with peace, joy, forgiveness and a life with no end. The Apostle Paul wrote that the "mortal will take on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:50-58). John also wrote:

Revelation 21:3-4 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

While this promise is for the future, the children of God have a taste of this life even here on earth. They can walk with God and worship Him, fellowship with His people and find peace, forgiveness, love and joy (even in the face of death). These things, now, still have the "smell of sin" tainting them, but one day even this will be taken away and all will be pure.

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What a vast contrast between two living conditions. One is a state of hatred, bitterness and death (even if one who is in this state does not acknowledge it). The other is a state of forgiveness, peace, joy and true life. Praise be to God who provides life to His children.

CONCLUSION

With these things in mind, John asked the rhetorical question: “But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?” In John’s mind, this is an impossible condition. To be shown the great love of God and then ignore the care and concern for a fellow believer’s need is incomprehensible. In the next chapter, he will follow up with the strong statement “If someone says, ‘I love God’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20).

Thus, John concluded this section with the admonition, “Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth” (4:18). Words

¹ See the previous Capitol Commission Missouri study for more details on the Bible’s teaching on sin at www.capitolcom.org/missouri/studies.

² Quoted by Daniel L. Akin, *1,2,3 John* The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Publishing Group, 2001), 157.

³ W.E. Vines, *The Expanded Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House Publishers, 1984), 693.

do not fill a stomach nor clothe the cold nor shelter the brother in need. Proper helping deeds come from a good understanding of the need, and a good understanding comes from getting personally involved in the needy brother’s life. I. Howard Marshall pointedly wrote concerning this passage: “The need for the world is not for heroic acts of martyrdom, but for heroic acts of material sacrifice.”⁵

The contrasts between children of the devil and the children of God are not subtle, they are vast and polar opposites. One is still in a state of death and hatred. The other is in a state of real life and is characterized by *agape* love. One has the example of Cain; the other is led by and produced by the one and only begotten Son of God—Jesus Christ.

But one can move from a state of death into that of eternal life. Through Christ, God can truly forgive all your sins and adopt you as His child—are you interested?

⁴ John R.W. Stott, *The Letters of John* The New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 144.

⁵ I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John* The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 195-96.