

THE DISTINGUISHING MARK OF LOVE **(1 John 3:11-18)**

I. The dangers involved with love (vs. 12-13).

- A. John reveals to us two dangers that deal with love.
- B. The first danger is what can happen when you do not love.
 - 1. To illustrate this, John is inspired to use the example of Cain killing Abel.
 - 2. Cain did not love his brother and it led him to murder.
 - 3. When we don't love, there is no middle ground according to scripture.
 - 4. We either hate or we love.
 - 5. When we don't love, it can lead to extremes of sin
 - 6. More will be said about this in another point.
- C. The other danger is that if you do love, the world will hate you.
 - 1. Jesus had warned John and the others about this (John 15:17-19).
 - 2. This has always been the case since Cain and Abel.
 - 3. Those that follow God's way are hated by the world.
- D. We have to decide which danger we want to face.

II. The distinction between lovers and haters (vs. 14-15).

- A. Love is the distinguishing mark between God's children and the devil's children.
- B. If we are lovers of brethren then we can know we have left the clutches of spiritual death and into spiritual life.
 - 1. The word "know" means definite knowledge.
 - 2. "Passed" means to go from one state into another.
 - 3. We have left death and moved into life.
- C. One thing we need to make clear is that loving does not save us, it is a sign that we are saved.
 - 1. He is not saying love is a condition of salvation.
 - 2. It shows the certainty in our knowledge that we are saved.
- D. Woods says it is a test that we and the world may determine if we are truly Christians or not.
 - 1. It is not if we have been baptized or give on the first day of the week or if we partake of the Lord's Supper.
 - 2. The test is if we love or not.
 - 3. If we truly love God and the brethren we will do or have already done those things just mentioned.
- E. Those that hate have made their abode with death.
 - 1. We mentioned that the child of God does righteous acts because he has made his abode with Jesus (vs 6).
 - 2. One who hates, or does not love, has chosen to live in spiritual death.
- F. In God's eyes, one who does not love is the same as a murderer.
 - 1. This does not mean one has taken another's life or has even thought about it.

2. But the attitude that leads to hate, or not loving, if followed out to its end, leads to murder.
- G. The same anger, envy and hatred that leads to murder has at its beginning point the failure to love the object of the hate.
1. When Jesus expounded upon the idea of “thou shalt not kill,” He explained that it was wrong to be angry at someone and say hurtful things like *raca* or *thou fool*.
 2. The reason is because the attitude that allows those things to be said, is the attitude that leads to murder.
- H. One who decides not to love, and adopts the attitude of a murderer, has no opportunity for eternal life as he is.
1. There is no way one can be saved unless he obeys the gospel command to love the brethren.
 2. Destruction awaits the one who hates.

III. **The depth of love we should have (vs 16).**

- A. As John gave an illustration of the depths of hatred, he now gives the greatest illustration of the depths of love.
- B. We learn of the love of God by His laying His life down for us.
1. Jesus freely, voluntarily gave His life for us.
 2. This shows to us just how much God loves us.
 3. By the way, this shows the deity of Jesus by saying that God laid down His life for us - another shot at the Gnostics.
- C. John now tells us that we should have the same depth of love for the brethren.
1. Ought means personal or moral obligation.
 2. Because of what Jesus did we are obligated, if we love the way we should, to give up our lives for the brethren.
- D. We are not told the circumstances in which this should be done but if it involves good being done by dying more than living then it seems to be what is being mentioned here.
- E. Jesus said that there is no greater love than for a man to lay down his life for his friend (John 15:13).
1. Jesus did so for those who were not even His friend.
 2. Therefore, we should be able to do it for those who are our brethren.
- F. Truly this shows the depths of love for the brethren.

IV. **The directive of the apostle.**

- A. The directive of John is found in verse 18 with a negative illustration of it in verse 17.
- B. We are directed to love in deed and in truth.
1. There is nothing wrong with saying we love someone.
 2. There is nothing wrong with writing the words “I love you” on paper.
 3. But it must go much further than that.
 4. We can’t stop with words, love must be shown in action.
- C. Love becomes reality when we put action behind our words.
- D. There is no way that we can love someone if we see him in need and do nothing to reach out and meet the need of that person.

1. This is hypocritical.
 2. There is no way that we love God if we are acting like this.
 3. The “love of God” refers to our love for God, not God’s love for us.
- E. If we have the ability to show our love through action and fail to act then we do not love like we say we do.
- F. Verse 17 teaches the principle of ability plus opportunity equals a responsibility.
1. It is our duty to meet the needs of those who are less fortunate than ourselves.
 2. When we fail to do so, we fail to love and fail to obey God.