

# THE SERMON NOTEBOOK

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SUBJECT: GODLY LOVE

TITLE: THE TEST OF LOVE

1 JOHN 2:10-15

INTRODUCTION. You either love God or you love the world. There is no other possibility. If you love God you love the things of God, but if you love the world you love the things of the world. Conversely, love for the things of God indicate a love for God, and love for the things of the world would indicate an affinity for the world. That to which you commit your thoughts, your energy, and your resources will let you know to whom you belong. The lost person cannot honor God, a carnal Christian dishonors Him, but only a believer who is walking in the light (a spiritual believer) can truly honor Him.

Today, I would like for us to take a serious look at just what the Lord had in mind when He commanded us to love Him and to love one another. This love is often distorted by well-meaning preachers and teachers, over-simplified by some who mean well, and ignored by even more people. Oh, we talk a lot about loving God and loving others, but a lot of what I hear is often superficial.

Now, I have a confession, and it is a confession I do not like making. I find it intriguing that many of the people who are called on to give their personal testimony either shock people with their sordid past or entertain them with stories of their misspent youth. I wonder, for example, if it would not be easier for some to admit to a life of addiction, dishonesty, and even violence than to stand up before a congregation and confess, "I am a hypocrite." Or, "I must confess that I have spent a lot of time talking with some of you about the rest of you. I am a backbiter, slanderer, and a gossip." I would not want to give a testimony like that.

Well, I have put it off as long as I dare, so here it is. Early in my walk with the Lord I would hear people, either in conversation, Sunday School lessons, or sermons talk about how much they loved God and how much they loved other people. Some preacher would go on and on about how much he loved his people, but as a young pastor I had to admit that there were some people who simply irritated the daylights out of me! Sorry, but in all honesty I had to admit it.

There were times when I would hear someone assume an air of spirituality - or so it seemed - and in euphoric terms "share" with us just how much they love the Lord. I had to throw in the word "share" just so you would know that I am still a Baptist preacher. We don't talk, tell, say, teach, or preach - we "share with you." Now that I have delayed a little longer, let me get to the thing that really concerned me back there in my high school and college days. When I saw someone take on a sort of "holy glow" and talk of how much love they felt in their heart for God, and how much the

love of God warmed their heart, I would examine my own feelings and come up lacking. There! I said it, and even now I am afraid someone misunderstand me or turn me off before I can explain.

As a young believer I wondered what was wrong with me. I was trying to love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, but some of testimonies I heard left me feeling like something was missing in my heart. I just didn't feel what some of those people claimed they felt. When I thought of my mother and father I felt something, and it was usually good. When I thought of my brothers and my sister I felt a love for them. I understood that, and even though I did not tell them I loved them after they were of school age they could never have doubted it. When I thought of my high school teammate or college roommate I would feel a special feeling of "friendship" for him - but I certainly didn't tell any male friend that I loved him - not in those days. And neither did they! As a fifteen year old boy who went to every associational youth meeting they scheduled, I discovered that such meetings were always attended by more girls than boys. And every time I went to a meeting or "fellowship" and some new girl smiled at me - well, I understood another kind of love.

But, why did I not "feel" that much love, or more when I thought about my Lord, or about all those other people He commanded me to love? Then, a number of years later I heard a respected pastor ask, "How can I love people who are not very lovable?" Of course, he had an answer: "I cannot love them, but Christ in me can love them." At first I saw that as a way out, but then it occurred to me that God did not command Jesus to love them, He commanded me to love them.

Then, I found that I do love God and I love those he commanded me to love - though not as perfectly as He loves them. I must constantly confess my failure (1 John 1:9), and seek His help as I grow in this area. But, never again will I permit some well meaning saint or pious super-saint to dump a load of guilt on me because I do not feel what he feels. If you have ever had a problem with this I pray that you will also find God's solution.

## I. LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER IS PROOF WE ARE IN CHRIST, 2:10-11.

*"He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (NKJV).*

### A. He Who Loves His Brother Abides in the Light 2:10.

1. The subject is the believer.
2. The object is another believer.
3. The action is love

There are four basic kinds of love in the New Testament. There is a filial love, or love for one's family. People should naturally love members of his own family, but Paul clearly shows in Romans

1 that there are people who do not have a natural affection for those they should naturally love - at that point he is not talking about homosexuality; he will cover that well enough.

The second kind of love (Eros) is what we may call a romantic love. When Hollywood talks about love they are usually talking about this kind of love. Popular movies, television programs, and many in the music industry today confuse love with lust. Volumes have been written on this kind of love, but that is not the kind of love John is dealing with here.

The two kinds of love we will concern ourselves with today are agape' and Philo. While both words are simply translated "love" in the New Testament, each word has A specific and distinctive meaning. You often hear someone make the statement that agape is Christian love. Well, let's explore that for a minute. In John 3:16, God loves the world with agape' type love (*agapao*). Does this not prove that agape' is godly love? Well, let's compare two verses.

When in John 3:35, "The Father loves the Son," it is with an agape' type love (*agapao*).

But in John 5:20, when "the Father loves the Son," it is with philo type love (*phileo*).

What must we conclude from this? God loves both with agape' and philo. But it gets more interesting. In John 3:19, we read, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and **men loved the darkness rather than the Light**, for their deeds were evil." Here, the word is agape. When evil people love evil things here, it is with agape' love!

What does it all mean? For one thing, when God loves, whether he loves the world with agape' love, or His Son with phileo love, it is always godly love. It is logical to assume that when godly people are loving others in the power of the Holy Spirit, they are practicing Christian love. Any love that has God as the subject is godly love. God loves perfectly, whether in agape' love or phileo love. Christians love imperfectly, yet in the power of the Holy Spirit, they can love with a godly, or Christian love. Lost people cannot love with a godly love, even when they manifest more phileo type love than many Christians.

Then, how am I to understand what kind of love the Lord expects of me? Agape' is a mental attitude kind of love. It can be commanded. Eros cannot be commanded. If you tell John to fall in love with Susan you have all but guaranteed that he will stay as far from Susan as he can.

But what about *phileo*? Suppose a new neighbor moves next door to Christian family. We will call them the Smiths. The pastor goes to visit the new family and then stops by to ask the Smiths to visit their new neighbors - after all, they are Christians and good prospects for their church. He explains that the parents are about your age and their children are in the same grades as your children. The boys play football and the girls have similar interests. The pastor encourages them to cultivate a relationship with the new neighbors, assuring them that they will be best friends.

The Smiths go over with a casserole to meet their neighbors. The neighbors are busy and the

children don't "hit it off." The things the pastor thought they might have in common are outweighed by the things they do not have in common. The Smiths are conservative Republicans and the neighbors are liberal Democrats. This is not a good mix. Both the Smiths and their neighbors face a dilemma: how can I love someone I don't even like? Will they feel guilty because God commands them to love one another when they don't even like one another?

The fact is, God does command agape', a mental attitude love, a love that can be directed, controlled, and monitored by the mind. You can genuinely love (agape') a person you have not yet come to love with a *phileo* type love. Christians are commanded to love one another, and among those you love with an *agape*' type of love, you will cultivate a deep and lasting friendship (*phileo*) with a some of them. Concentrate on the love God commands, the love you can direct with your mind. Seek the highest good for that person, beginning with his salvation, and continuing with service or ministry to that person. If the Lord so blesses you that you develop a close friendship (*phileo*) with that person you are blessed indeed.

4. The Holy Spirit enables you to love others.

*"Now hope does not disappoint, because **the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit** who was given to us"*(Rom. 5:5).

5. The Bible is your infallible guide.

The believer should love (*agapao*) everyone. When that person is also a believer, you should also seek to cultivate a deeper friendship (*phileo*) him. Years ago, I stood a few feet from Tommy and witnessed to him in Jackson, MS. I had the privilege of leading him to trust Jesus Christ for his salvation. I also had an opportunity to visit with him a few months later and hear him say that he wanted to serve the Lord. I loved Tommy - I still do, even if I would have hesitated to invite him into my home until I got to know him a lot better. You see, Tommy had just committed a brutal murder and I met him right after his arrest while he was in jail awaiting trial. I saw him later at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. I experienced an agape' type love for Tommy. Then, after we communicated by mail and visited in person, I sensed that in spite of what Tommy had done, I was developing a phileo type of love for him.

If you understand the love God commands, you will love the unloved, the unlovely, and the seemingly unlovable. You may or may not become close friends, but you will direct a love toward that person that will lead you to seek to meet his needs in the Lord. You have the greatest example in the world in Jesus, and you have the greatest Enabler in your heart in the Person of the Holy Spirit.

6. The Holy Spirit and the Word of God will help keep you from stumbling.

7. The one who loves others abides in the Light.

Jesus is the Light of the world. Those who love as Jesus loves keeps on abiding in the Light. We

do come to know Him by generating a warm feeling toward others, we love others because we have been transformed by the grace of God, and because we are being conformed to the image of the Son of God, which is what Sanctification is really all about.

This does not mean that we keep on being a Christian as long as we keep on loving one another. It means that we have been placed “in Christ” by the grace of God and that we keep on abiding in Him.

B. Conversely, He Who Hates His Brother Is in Darkness.

1. Jesus is the Light and in Him is no darkness at all.
2. The darkness of the world cannot extinguish the Light of the World (John 1:5).
3. To fail to love as God commands is proof one is still in darkness.
4. He who does not love his brother is spiritually blind.

II. GOD’S COMMAND TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER IS APPLICABLE TO ALL. 2:12-14.

*“I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.”*

A. John Applies It to “Little Children,” 2:12.

1. In verses 12-14 John deals with various stages of development.
  - a. Little children are “babes in Christ.”
  - b. Young men are spiritual adolescents.
  - c. Fathers are mature believers.
2. Their sins have been forgiven.
3. They are forgiven “for His Name’s sake.”

B. He Applies It to Fathers. 2:13, 14.

1. They have known Him (experientially) Who is from the beginning.
2. These are the more mature believers.

C. John Applies It to the Young Men, 2:13-14.

1. They have overcome the wicked one, 2:13.
2. They are strong, 2:14.
3. The Word of God abides in them, 2:14

III. DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD, 2:15.

*“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”*

A. Believers Must Not Love the World or the Things of the World.

1. Worldly people love the world.
2. The word for world here (cosmos) denotes the organized universe.
3. The cosmos is the kingdom ruled by Satan.

When Christians talk about loving the world we must remember that since America entered the Post-Christian era countless millions of people have been secularized through our process of education. Only Christians who have been trained in the home and in church may understand Scriptural terms and concepts. The New Age, or postmodern American youth, who has been taught to love Mother Earth and celebrate Earth Day, may be shocked to find that Christians are taught not to love the world. Christians should have the greatest appreciation for God’s creation of all people on Earth, but we understand that Scriptural references to “the world” go far beyond geography and topography.

The world is that which is ruled by Satan, the prince of this world. We are talking about the world that hates Jesus Christ (John 7:7). Jesus said,

*“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you”* (John 15:18-19).

The world denotes a system of thought that is unalterably set against God - not the gods of the world, but against the Creator and Judge of the world. That enmity is especially focused on Jesus Christ - and not just some pseudo-Christ, but the Christ of the Bible. We see that enmity in the political systems of the world. Marxism professes to be godless, stateless, and classless. Communism is evil, and I thank God for Ronald Reagan’s assessment of the old USSR as an “evil empire.” Communism and Nazism have been responsible for evil beyond our wildest estimates. But what about

democracy? While it is the greatest system the world has known, it cannot redeem the world. A democracy founded on Scriptural principles - as the Founders assure us America was - can provide the church with an opportunity to evangelize the world, but it cannot redeem the world through politics. As a matter of fact all three branches of government in America have waged an unholy war against God and His Word for several decades. Congress has passed some ungodly laws and some presidents have signed them. *Rowe vs. Wade* is a perfect example. Some of our presidents have brought gross immorality into the White House, and as immoral as John F. Kennedy was, his administration did not revel in it the way Clinton's did. An indicator of where we are spiritually is the support Clinton had among those who professed to be Bible believing Christians.

The world is not only full of ungodly political systems, it is also full of ungodly religions. Make no mistake about it, Satan is the both the source and the force behind all false religions. Sadly, today in America courts, school boards, and legislative bodies, are working overtime in their effort to shackle the Gospel and promote Islam. Children have been required to play the role of a Muslim, with extra points going to the ones who came to school dressed as a typical Muslim. The University of North Carolina has decided that all incoming freshmen should read the Koran. How can you explain the popularity of Islam with so many politicians and media moguls? James 4:4 answers that:

*“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”*

God has a lot of enemies in Congress, in religious temples and mosques, in education, and in society in general. Radical environmentalism, radical feminism, and the homosexual lobby are but a few examples. To illustrate the power of the homosexual lobby in America all you have to do is look at the scandal that has rocked the Roman Catholic Church in recent months. The media has had a field day, and lest you think the media has shown great courage in taking on the Catholic church, ask yourself one question: Who in the media has had the courage to announce that the real issue is homosexuality?

#### B. You Cannot Love the Father and the World.

1. Proof of your relationship with the Lord is seen in your attitude toward the world.
2. Lost people are of the world and you expect them to be worldly.
  - a. Their worldliness make take the form of evil in its most vial forms.
  - b. It may, however, take on the form of social good.
3. Christians must avoid worldliness.

We are in the world, but we must not be of the world. You are just as worldly as your sins make you. You cannot count yourself as spiritual because you abstain from the sins of the flesh and the

world. You are just as worldly as your jealousy makes you. Substitute for jealousy, hate, envy, lust, greed, bitterness, or covetousness. Through prayer, Bible study, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit we learn to set our affection on the things of God and to resist these sins.

CONCLUSION. You either love God or you love the world. If the things of the world claim your attention and your affection you are worldly. If you love God you love what He loves and hate what He hates. If you are abiding in Christ you will love God and you will love one another. How do I avoid worldliness, and how can I be sure that I am walking with my Lord? In Romans 12:1-2, Paul provides an answer:

*“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

INVITATION