

"Don't Judge..." - 1 John 3:10-13

by Pastor Tim Dodson, at Jesus Fellowship of Believers
Sunday, March 15th, 2015 - Menomonie, Wisconsin

1 John 3:10-14 (10) *In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.* (11) *For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,* (12) *not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.* (13) *Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.*



In verse 10 of this chapter, John tells us what a real child of God looks like: *"So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God."*

Such definitive language by us *or* John is apt to cause us to squirm. Because we have frankly been beaten down in the past few decades with the siren call of the unredeemed, the rebellious, the 'runner'...all chanting in unison ***"Hey...don't judge me! The bible says don't judge me!"*** But wait...does it really say that? We know that Matthew 7 tells us to "judge not, lest you be judged..." Jesus went on therein not to *prohibit* judgment but to say that the judgment that you exercise will be exercised 'back at ya,' and with the measure you use it, it will be measured toward you. *"Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"*

James 4 tells us *"...who are you to judge your neighbor?"* And Romans 2, *"Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?"*

But what about John 7:24? There we are told to *"... do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."* Proverbs 31:9 tells us *"Open your mouth, **judge righteously**..."* Galatians 6 says *"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness"* and 2 Timothy 2:24 *"... the Lord's servant must correct his opponents with gentleness."* That's hard to accomplish without any judgment on our part! 1 Corinthians 6 adds to this debate with *"Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame."* Leviticus 19:15 *"in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor."* 1 Corinthians 5:12 *"Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?"*

Matthew 7:15 warns us to *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."* Again, how do we do that unless we make some judgment? 1 Corinthians 14:29 tells us to *"Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge."*

Christians are often accused of "judging" whenever they speak out against sinful action or acknowledge a state of immaturity in another's walk. However, that is not the meaning of the Scripture verses that states, *"Do not judge."* There is a righteous kind of judgment we are **supposed** to exercise—*yet always with a careful discernment.* (John 7:24). Such is not only NOT prohibited, but in fact we scripturally called to point out the truth in hope—and with the ultimate goal—of bringing repentance in the other person (James 5:20), a further growth and maturity and maybe

even restoration to the fellowship. We are to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). We are to proclaim what God's Word says about sin. 2 Timothy 4:2 instructs us, "*Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction.*" While no man knows for sure another's salvation and thus we cannot condemn, the fact is we **are** to "judge" sin and faith manifest, but always with the goal of presenting the solution for sin and its consequences—the Lord Jesus Christ, and the hope and desire for growth. (John 14:6).

So knowing this fact, John “steps up” and says “this is a Christian” and “this is not.” Thank you brother John, because someone needs to do it or a lot of people are going to spend eternity in hell with surprised looks on their faces! The fact is, the greater world of Christianity has become a ‘mile wide and an inch deep.’ Statistics overwhelmingly show that the vast majority of Americans believe themselves to be Christians, while church attendance (let alone actual *participation*) is FAR below that number. And when the doctrinal questions start to come, quickly it is evident that many folks have a completely different definition than the faithful minority. Knowledge and understanding of the Word? *Not really...* (they can quote “...*do not judge!*”). Moral purity? Faithful service? Seek first the kingdom of God? Love the Lord with all your heart and living? Hmmm...*not so much*. So instead of stepping up, it was just a whole lot easier to redefine the concept of what a Christian is.

There is this idea floated out there called universalism, or “*universal reconciliation.*” The idea therein is that everybody will eventually be received into heaven, essentially meaning we will all ‘make it.’ But not according to Jesus. And for our text today, *not according to John*. He has and *is* saying there are actually two groups of people and *only* two: the children of God and the children of the devil. John clearly took the position that everyone *isn't* going to heaven. The righteous practice righteousness. Those that **are** not, do not. We do what we are: ***that's a fact.*** Now John wants us to see something specifically concerning the authentic practice of righteousness. The child of God, he tells us, loves his brothers. It's a test.

How can we truly love our brother and sister if honesty does not take center stage? There is no doubt that I and this fellowship have paid dearly over the years for trying to love in a Christlike manner. We love to receive the accolades, but it is hard to receive correction. And even harder to accept an insinuation that we are not where we should be with Christ. A lot of folks over the years have 'taken a hike' because someone expressed concern about their spiritual standing. Instead of realizing that real love mandates such an interaction, and Jesus Himself practiced this kind of love, we are so apt to be offended and turn and bite the hand that has fed us...not to mention the hands that loved us for such a long time.

Somewhere we have gotten the erroneous idea that Christ love is to always feel good and is always to be edifying. But nowhere is such a version of love presented in scripture, but in fact, that is the world's definition! Thus adhering and even demanding such an interaction with your brothers and sisters is not Christ, but the *world*. And rejecting the biblical version, frankly expresses the fact that we are unfamiliar with it, or refusing such, and that should cause great concern within us. For grasping this aspect of the nature of Christ and His church is a crucial handprint of salvation! This is why John was able to say "*These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us.*" (1John 2:19)

As I said, adhering to this long surrendered position of truth, is costly. I have lost count of how many folks have turned on their brothers and sisters here because we would not support some direction or decision in their lives. Or they were not allowed to take a leadership position in the church because of issues that needed to be addressed in their living. Perhaps they were warned of a danger, or received correction on a behavior. All of which was done because we loved them, but in their eyes we were being cruel or abusive. Again, such expresses a great lack of understanding of God and His love! It is my understanding that such is one of the fundamental characteristics of a church. To challenge, stretch, teach, and grow those who are part of it.

John says from that from the beginning they've heard this message: 'You are to love one another.' Yet I ask today, do we as Christians really know what that looks like? We grasp the concepts of fellowship, kindness, and blessing. We embrace all the lovely aspects of community. But do we understand what 'Christ loving' really looks like? Do we not factually acknowledge that God often says no, as well as allows us to go through uncomfortable and even painful experiences *because* He loves us? A.W. Tozer once was quoted as saying "*It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply.*"

We all probably know that John is known as "the apostle of love." It is said that, unlike the other apostles, having lived to an old age, that when he couldn't walk anymore he would be carried about on a chair to preach, and he would exhort the brethren with this one simple message: "*Love one another.*" John herein refers to Cain and Abel in Genesis 4, so maybe by the reference, "*in the beginning,*" he's actually referring to the beginning of the Bible. 'From the very beginning of the pages of Scripture, this is the message. It's not something new. It's not just a message that Jesus brought. It's not just a message the apostles preached. It's the message of the whole Scriptures, that we're to *love* the brethren.' But we have heard all this before, many times before, and John is reminding his audience that even though they've heard it before, we still have so much to learn what it means. 'We've heard this message before,' John says. 'Now pay attention to this message. It's an important message. It couldn't be more important.'

From the "*in the beginning*" God has been loving mankind with an inexplicable and unsurpassed love. But not the love of this world, rather a love He refers to as "agape." Agape love is a love that surpasses and renders pale that of this world. And that love was sometimes gloriously joyous, and sometimes horrendously painful. This is the biblical account, from Genesis to Revelation. Yet such was always executed on our behalf...a Creator and Redeemers parental care and nurture. Always meted out with the desire that we become something more. Always reflecting a heart for us that rejects the blinders we want to wear when it comes to one another. It is a love that is best for the other person, not for the one giving it out. Worldly love is frankly designed more for me the giver than you the receiver. Because I don't want the hassle of your rejection of my agape love, nor do I wish to endure the tears and maybe the anger that I perhaps may receive for my efforts.

The world however will never get it. In fact, John says "don't be surprised if what you get in return for your practice of Christ love will be instead hatred." Don't be surprised. But honestly, I still am regularly surprised. A few years ago, our society starting passing "Good Samaritan" laws. This because often when the people who tried to stop and help someone who was in a crisis or life-threatening situation would sometimes get sued by the person they tried to help because things didn't go as planned. But how did the rescuer have anything to do with getting you into that situation? Was it not simply love to try to rescue you?

God's love judges. He judges our actions, our intentions, and the possible consequences. Now we are not God, nor should we ever presume to be. But God, in the exercise of His perfect agape love, will always speak and often *intervene* if we are heading for the cliff or if we are sick. He does so, because if He did not, He could not say that He really loves us. And He *does* love us so very much. Let us love our brothers in the same manner. Let us love as God loves. And may we all be so receptive to that love. From our God, and our brethren...

*"Brethren, if anyone among
you wanders from the truth,
and someone turns him back,
let him know that he who turns a sinner
from the error of his way
will save a soul from death
and cover a multitude of sins."*

- James 4:19-20