

The previous message in First John addressed our hope of heaven and the work of Jesus in each of us being completed when we see Him. We read of that glorious promise, "We will be like Him for we will see Him as He is." 1John 3:2 The passage went on to say that if we have this hope, the hope of seeing Him and our sanctification being complete, then we will purify ourselves as He is pure. We are pure in the eyes of God, but we all know that we are still a work in progress when it comes to living out what God has done in our heart. Old patterns die hard, so we must make an effort to allow the fruit of the Spirit to flow from us rather than the works of the flesh. (Titus 2:12-13) We want to be like the One we love and adore, Jesus, our Redeemer. We admire all that He does, and so we want to be like Him. In fact, it is a command, "Be holy, because I am holy." (1Peter 1:15-16)

In our text for today, John declares that the only fence between believer and unbeliever is like a razor. You can't sit on it! You have to come down on one side or the other. John sees no gray area in the life of a believer. Like being a little bit pregnant, you are or you aren't. And if you are, there is new life! That life is growing. (1Corinthians 3:18)

Let's go back to his words. ⁴ Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. ⁵ But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. ⁶ No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. God has laws. He has given us illustrations in the physical world. There are laws of gravity, mathematics, thermodynamics, etc. God has spiritual laws as well. The question that would have come to the Jewish believer of the first century is, "Does he mean the laws given to Moses or the law of love?" The context of the letter of First John shows us that he is referring to law of love, which covers the Spirit of the laws God gave to Moses. (Matthew 22:40) Sin is selfishness. It is contrary to love for God and loving our neighbor as our self.

It is helpful to think of sin as lawlessness in the kingdom of God. The breaking of laws requires justice be served. God is the Judge in the kingdom of God and He can see the heart. (Psalm 96:13) He knows all the circumstances. He can't be deceived. He will render to everyone according to what they have done. (Proverbs 24:12) Thus, we see the great need to have accepted Jesus taking the punishment we deserve. He came to earth to take away our sin, our lawless deeds. He could only do that because He had no sins of His own. He never broke the law of love. Thus, He could take our punishment in our place. (1Peter 3:18)

Verse 6 tells us that if we have truly seen or known Him, we can't continue in sin. How could we go on rebelling after seeing love that would pay that costly a price for us? How could we keep willfully breaking the law of God when we see what it cost Jesus to deliver us from the just sentence we deserve? When you really see that love, you can't help but respond with love. Love begets love. (1John 4:19) To know Him implies having experienced His heart. Have you? Then you know you can't just go on with your old life, living for self, ignoring the needs of others, selfishly hoarding

Commented [notes1]: 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, Titus 2:12-13 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:15-16 (NIV)

Commented [notes3]: 18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Cor 3:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matt 22:40 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 13 they will sing before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth. Psalms 96:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 12 If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done? Prov 24:12 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: 18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, 1 Peter 3:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 19 We love because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19 (NIV)

your time and your resources. (James 5:3-5) When you see and know Him, you want to be like Him.

⁷ Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. ⁸ He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. There is that razor fence! Those who live righteously, or we could say rightly according to God's standards, are like their Savior. Those whose lives are contrary to the laws of God, who live for self alone are of the devil. John is agreeing with Jesus' statement, "By their fruit you will know them." (Matthew 7:20) The heart is demonstrated in the life one lives.

Recently the actress Sandra Bullock was interviewed about her role in the movie *Blind Side*. She had to spend time with the person whose role she was playing in the movie, a wealthy Mississippi Christian woman, Leigh Anne Tuohy. Mrs. Bullock said that she had heard many people try to witness to her, but knew their lives didn't match their message. The time she spent with Leigh Ann convinced her that there really were believers in Jesus that loved unconditionally. She said she finally met someone that walked the walk.

John isn't talking about sinless perfection or he'd be contradicting what he said earlier. (1John 1:8) It's about the overall life pattern being self-centered or Christ centered. Mrs. Bullock saw her own life as better than the life of most of the people that invited her to church, so she saw no need to seriously consider what they were saying. It took someone that lived it to get her attention.

Jesus came to set you free from enslavement to evil desires that destroy your life as well as others' lives and to enable you to love God and others. (Romans 6:4-7) In other words, He came to destroy the devil's works. The devil works through our selfish sinful nature to harm us and those we come in contact with, because he hates the Giver of life. He is the lawless one. (2Thessalonians 2:9) When you find freedom in Jesus to walk away from your selfish desires and live a life of love, then Jesus has destroyed the work of the devil in your life.

⁹ No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰ This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. If you are born of God you just can't continue to rebel against Him. If you do, you'll be under such conviction that you will become desperate to walk in the freedom He has given you. (Galatians 5:1) You will crucify the sinful nature with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:24) Every time you stumble you will run to Christ in repentance and commit to never going down that road again. We have been born again by the seed of the Word of God. (1Peter 1:23-25) Jesus is being formed in you. The metamorphosis has begun. The old must go; the new has come. (2Corinthians 5:17)

Verse 10 is another of those assurances of faith that John has placed in his letter. Children of God have a life change. They can't go on habitually in sin. Breaking the

Commented [notes9]: 3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days.
4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.
5 You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. [James 5:3-5 (NIV)]

Commented [notes10]: 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.
Matt 7:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
1 John 1:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.
5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.
6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin--
7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.
Romans 6:4-7 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders,
2 Thess 2:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: 1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.
Gal 5:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.
Gal 5:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. 24 For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, 25 but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:23-25 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
2 Cor 5:17 (NIV)

law of God makes them miserable and they just can't continue to do so. Those who went out from them were not living righteous lives and did not love their brothers. It was a sure sign that they were not of God. (1John 2:19) If you want to discern where someone or some group is coming from, watch to see if they do what is right and if they love others or not. Are you wondering if you are truly born again? Do you do what is right and truly love others? There's your answer.

¹¹ This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

¹² Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous. To appeal to antiquity, John goes back, not to the beginning of Jesus' ministry, not to Abraham, but all the way back to the very first stories after creation.

Adam must have taught his sons how to worship through sacrifice, something probably directly taught to him by the Lord. There was nothing wrong with a grain sacrifice. There would be sacrifices of grain in the instructions given to Moses. (Exodus 40:29) God looks at the heart. Something was wrong with Cain's heart and so God did not accept his act of worship. Perhaps Cain thought God should be pleased with the work of his hands, and conversely Able saw his offering of blood as God's provision.

The word "evil one" to whom Cain belonged is the word *poneros*. It refers to an active, aggressive opposition to what is good. Because Cain belonged to the evil one, the evil one used the jealousy and hatred in the heart of Cain to incite the first murder. (Genesis 4:8) The word for murder here is used in the sense of butchering an animal. It was a violent, bloody crime. The lesson we were to derive from that is that we should belong to God and love one another and reject the emotion of hatred. (Genesis 4:7)

¹³ Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him. We shouldn't be surprised if the world hates us because it hated Jesus. He only did what was good. He only showed love. Even His rebukes to the religious leaders were in love to help them see their own heart so that they might change. (John 5:34; Acts 6:7) So if we are like Jesus, we too will be hated. But our response should be in love. Peter writes, *⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.* 1 Peter 3:9 (NIV) That is when the world will notice we are truly different.

There is a peace in being in Jesus for which they long. It isn't be ruffled by anything the world can dish out. It's the joy of forgiveness on the face of that woman in Pakistan, Shafia, after all she endured. It's the confident conviction of the two young women in jail in Iran. When given the chance to renounce their faith or stay in the notorious prison and experience starvation and abuse, they said they had already thought it through. They could not deny their Savior! What a witness to everyone in the courtroom! Peace that passes understanding! (Philippians 4:7) Those women have obviously passed from death to life, while the murderous intent of their

Commented [notes18]: 19 They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. 1 John 2:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 29 He set the altar of burnt offering near the entrance to the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, and offered on it burnt offerings and grain offerings, as the LORD commanded him. Ex 40:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 8 Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Gen 4:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes21]: 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." Gen 4:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 34 Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved. John 5:34 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. Acts 6:7 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:7 (NIV)

persecutors shows that they are in darkness, belonging to the evil one. They remain in death.

It isn't always so clearly evident. Real life is often unnoticed, a donation to the persecuted church, time spent listening to someone in pain, a card of encouragement to a brother in Christ, a prayer lifted up for the sick, and all acts of love from an unselfish heart. All these actions are evidence that you have passed from death to life, for they display love for one another.

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. You know John 3:16. It's a great witnessing verse to share with the unsaved, but here is one for us now that we are saved, 1John 3:16. What is the Bible's definition of love? It's the life of Jesus, laying down His life for us, each and every day and especially that final day on the cross. That's love! No greater love has ever been witnessed. But the verse goes on to tell us what we ought to do about it. Jesus is always our example. If He came down from heaven to lay down His life for us, then we ought to lay down our lives for others. (John 6:38) Real Christianity is not hype, nor the spectacular; it is just the dying to self to love others. That is being like Christ!

Commented [notes25]: 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. John 6:38 (NIV)

So how do we live that out? John gets down to the very practical application. *¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.* It's not about talk; it's about action, action that costs us. As a church, we saw a half million Muslims without the gospel and shared what was needed to bring them the greatest need. We saw Hope Cottage filled to overflowing, having to reject women with children on cold nights and we gave what was needed to start their building campaign. But it didn't really hurt that much. We didn't have to lay down our lives to do it, for we have such abundance.

Church, let us be Christlike, and give when we see a real need, give until it hurts. I'm not just talking about money. Sometimes giving time can be more costly than giving finances. Give of your time for the Potter's Hand Productions, for that lonely person next door, Old Town Mission, or for the food bank. Obey the Spirit of God and give like Jesus gave, not just with talk, but with actions. And don't do it because someone's watching or because of eternal reward or even a sense of self worth, but because Jesus did it for you. (Ephesians 6:7)

Commented [notes26]: 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, Eph 6:7 (NIV)

¹⁹ This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence ²⁰ whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. Here is another test of assurance. How do you know that you belong to the truth? How do you know it isn't that cult down the street? You know because you give from the heart like Jesus gave for you. You know because love motivates you to live unselfishly. Then your heart can be at rest in His presence. Think of the Old Testament characters that fell trembling in the presence of the Lord, people like Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Habakkuk. You can stand at rest in God's presence because Jesus' paid it all, and that that is evidenced by your changed heart.

And when you start thinking of some sin in the past or even some recent stumble, you can look to the change in your life and know you belong to the truth. You know God knows that you long to live like His Son. (Romans 8:5)

²¹ Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God
²² and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. If we know we live in love, and we know we have forsaken our rebellion against God, our lawlessness, then we have confidence before God, for the work of the cross is evident in our desires and actions. God heard Jesus because Jesus pleased God in everything. (John 8:29) If our hearts are changed and we live in the law of love, we can speak freely to God and know we are heard. Obedience can't be the lever with which we pry God into giving us what we want. Rather, love is the motivation that causes us to ask what pleases Him.

²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. In case we weren't sure if John was addressing the Laws of Moses or the commands of Jesus, he clarifies here for us. There are just two. Believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ. That is to believe that He is all God declared Him to be. That implies loving the Father and the Son. The second is to love one another. (Matthew 22:37-40)

²⁴ Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us. It's really straightforward. If you believe in Jesus and love others, you live in Jesus and He lives in you. This is now test number 5 on how to know we are born again, or as this verse words it, that He lives in us. The Holy Spirit resides in you. He is the One that helped you believe, produced in you the love for others, and caused you to desire what pleases God. (Psalm 37:4) He is the One that helps you die to self and live a life of love.

With John, it is very clear that those who left were going into error because they did not love. You can almost sense the frustration in John's letter as he repeats what a life in Christ looks like over and over.

We need to hear it too. We are confronted with all these self-confident people that say that they have evolved beyond Christianity, but a closer look at their life shows they live for self. Don't be shaken by the many ideologies that flow through this city. You can know Jesus lives in you, by the love He has placed in your hearts for others, by the dying of self to serve others, and by the change in your heart's desires. If those changes are not true of you, come to Jesus today. You can know the truth. You don't need to wonder. He will come in and change your very nature. He showed you what love is by laying down His life for you. *²³ And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another...*

Commented [notes27]: 5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. Romans 8:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him." John 8:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes29]: 37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matt 22:37-40 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: Psalms 37:4 (NIV)
4 Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.