

Eternity Daily Bible Study

The Importance Of Love

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Verses: 1 John 2:10
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1 John 2:10 *He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no offense in him.*

The word "offense" used here is "skandalon" (in the original Greek) which comes from a certain type of snare or trap and means to stumble, offend, make a serious mistake, be ensnared in sin or commit a "scandal". Other translations put it this way: ESV: *Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.*

More simply put, if we love our brother in the Lord, we will dwell in God's light and never make the sort of mistake that causes people to say: "Oh my goodness, that's just so awful...." First, let's take a look at what the apostle John means by being in God's light:

1 John 1:4-7 *And we write these things to you so that your joy may be full. (5) And this is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. (6) If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. (7) But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

1 John 2:8-11 *Again, I write a new commandment to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true Light now shines. (9) He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness until now. (10) He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no offense in him. (11) But he who hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because darkness has blinded his eyes.*

These two passages obviously have very similar themes:

- a) God is light and there is no darkness in Him whatsoever.
- b) There is no fellowship between light and darkness. We simply cannot have fellowship with God and walk in darkness. To say that you can do so is lying.
- c) We can be self deceived. We can think we are "in the light" when in fact we are in the darkness.
- d) The critical test of whether we are truly in the light is whether or not we love our brothers and sisters in Christ. This type of love is known as practicing the truth.
- e) If we hate our brother we are actually walking in darkness. This causes us to stumble.
- f) If we love one another, then we are truly in the light, we have fellowship with God and we also have fellowship with one another.
- g) If we walk in the light by loving one another we do not stumble and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

If we love one another, then we ARE in the light, we do have God, we are forgiven, we are cleansed and we are pleasing to God. This is GOOD NEWS. We do not need 613 commandments in order to please God and lead a blameless life! We just need to love one another, and then we will be without blame in God's eyes. And if we do occasionally sin we will be forgiven and washed clean! Love puts us on the right track and makes us OK with God.

The apostle Peter adds this perspective: **1 Peter 4:8** *And above all things have fervent love for one another, because "love will cover a multitude of sins."*

The loving Christian lives in the joy of the Lord. "I write this so that your joy may be made full.." (1 John 1:4 above). Loving the brethren is the spiritual gateway to the joyous, Holy Spirit filled, clean-as-a-whistle life! Just get that right and the rest seems to fall into place in short order!

There is a downside as well. These passages also tell us that it is easy to be loveless, and to walk around in darkness, stumbling about in religious self-deception.

A couple of months ago I was helping a national missionary family with a very sick child to get a visa to the USA, so the child could be treated at the only hospital in the world that specialized in that particular disease. (This family are very close friends of ours). The visa application process required letters of support. One required letter was from the US branch of the major missions agency this family belonged to. The letter the missions director sent was cold, brutal and completely unresponsive. It simply protected the agency from everything without helping the family at all. It did not contain even a shred of compassion or human decency. Both my wife and I were deeply wounded for days by that brief letter. (What's worse is that there was no actual real risk for the mission.)

The person who wrote it was a theologically educated leader of a major missions agency whom I am sure he thinks he is "in the light" and worthy of spiritual leadership. But the lack of human decency, let alone brotherly love, indicates that the true state of affairs is: that he is actually walking in darkness! His education and position has deceived him into believing that he is spiritually OK when his callous actions indicate that there is in fact a major spiritual problem.

The general principle is that if someone is cold and hard and corporate and tough then they are not walking in love, thus they are not practicing the truth. In that case they do not have genuine fellowship with God and are actually in darkness.

Religious organizations are full of such power plays and they are a significant reason why people are walking out of churches, Christian non-profits and missions agencies in droves and never returning. They see the hypocrisy, they see the hatred, superiority and coldness, intuitively know that it is not of Christ, and they are offended and stumbled.

Instinctively we all know that the signs of real Christianity are things such as truthfulness, brotherly love, humility and godly wisdom. And that the signs of fake Christianity include hypocrisy, arrogant power games, coldness, and worldly wisdom. The New Testament even talks about the "wheat and the tares" and "false brethren".

There is an absolute existential separation between the generous, good-hearted loving sheep and the selfish ignorant goats in Matthew 25, and deep down we know that it is so. Something inside us reacts and says "That is just not Christian! How can anyone ever do such a horrible thing!" Indeed Jesus tells us that no amount of ministry effectiveness can make up for such wickedness:

Matthew 7:20-23 *Consequently, by their fruits you shall know them. (21) "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. (22) Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name we cast out demons, and in Your name we did many mighty works?' (23) "And then I will confess to them, 'I never knew you! Depart from Me, you who work iniquity!'"*

These verses tell us that someone can have what appears to be a powerful and effective ministry and still be a worker of iniquity! With that warning in mind, let's get back to the positive side of things.

God has chosen us to be creatures of love and righteousness who dwell in His light for eternity:

John 12:35-36 *Then Jesus said to them, "For yet a little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. (36) While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become sons of light."*

Ephesians 5:8 *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light--*

1 Peter 2:9 *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellent virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

Colossians 1:12-14 *giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. (13) He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, (14) in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

We belong forever to the kingdom of light and of love. That is our home and our eternal dwelling place. When we love one another, then we are "at home in our home" having fellowship with God and with one another.

As C.S. Lewis once said in his book *Mere Christianity*: "God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. " As Christians we run on Christ and He alone is our food, and doing His will is our hidden manna, and His brotherly love is our sustenance.

Heaven is our home and we dwell in the light by loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. When we obey the New Commandment we please God and are "on the right track spiritually". Love puts us in right alignment with God because God is love.

The blameless Christian life cannot ever be achieved through works of the law (Galatians 2:15-21) but it can be achieved through the Spirit of love (Galatians 5:16-18). When we are led by the Spirit of love (the Holy Spirit) we are no longer under the law, indeed we are free, we live in the light, and we will know eternal joy!

Blessings,

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