

Hatred That Is Closer Than We Think

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Preacher: Josh Johnston

[0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn now to our Bibles, and as you know, Josh Johnson has been leading us through John's first letter. And we're coming today to the second half of 1 John, chapter 3.

And we're going to read from 1 John 3, verse 13, to the end of the chapter. If you don't have a Bible and you need one, there's some scattered around at the sides of the hall and in the transept or at the back.

And you can borrow one of those. So 1 John, chapter 3, reading from verse 13.

The apostle says, Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers.

Brother does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

[1 : 08] By this, we know love. That he laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against them, how does God's love abide in him?

Little children, let us not love in word or talk, but in deed and truth. By this, we know that we are of the truth and reassure our hearts before him.

For whenever our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our heart and he knows everything.

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God.

Whatever we ask, we receive from him. Because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is the commandment. That we believe in the name of his son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he has commanded us.

Whoever keeps his commandments abides in him and he in them. And by this, we know he abides in us. By the spirit whom he has given us.

[2 : 23] Amen. And may God indeed bless to us his word. Well, do you have 1 John chapter 3 open in front of you?

To be forewarned is to be forearmed. And one of the realities of the Christian life is that we always need to be prepared for hostility.

And even using that kind of language can make some rather uncomfortable. But the truth is that clear and definite beliefs will always lead to some degree of tension.

And that is most definitely true when it comes to standing on the truths of the scriptures. Standing on the truths that the apostles were witnesses to. Having seen and heard and touched the incarnate resurrected Jesus.

Hostility will come our way. And so to be forewarned is to be forearmed. It is locked in. It's fixed that to belong to Jesus means to be hated in this world.

[3 : 43] And so the more we're prepared for that, the better we'll be able to be faithful to Jesus. Well, John in our passage this evening, draws on implications from last week's passage.

And I think the way that this section of the letter works is that John has unpacked in two ways what it means to live in this passing but dark world.

We saw a couple of times ago in 1st John. First, that we will always have antichrists in our midst.

There will always be among the visible church those who are false teachers.

That is one of the realities of life in this dark world. And second, what we saw last week was that what we are is not immediately obvious.

There are children of God and children of the devil. And those who belong to the evil one masquerade as Christians. John said last week to his recipients, to all who continue with the apostolic gospel, that we are God's children now.

[4 : 57] And what we will be has not yet appeared. Life in this world conceals what is ultimately true of us. And what is true of those who claim to be Christian but are actually born of the evil one.

And now, as John moves into this section of the letter starting from verse 13, he draws implications from both of those realities. First, the fact that we will always have false teachers, antichrists in our midst.

He says in chapter 4 verses 1 to 6, a big implication of that, don't believe everything you hear from a pulpit. But before we get there, this week has second implication from life in this dark world that the reality, the theological reality, that who we are is not immediately obvious in this world.

And so our passage this evening spells out the implication of that reality, which is that hatred is closer than we think. Hatred is closer than we think.

And the first thing we see in this passage is that kind of hatred. Verses 13 to 15, we see loathing like Cain. Loathing like Cain.

[6 : 13] John says, do not be surprised that there will be people who claim the name Christian but hate you. Such hatred makes clear who is born of the evil one.

Verse 13. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. I am sure that we're all familiar in some way with the idea that to be a Christian is to be out of sync with the world around us.

There is an enmity from the world to the things of God. And I'm sure that we can all think of instances where this has been manifest in our own lives or for our church or perhaps for friends and others we know.

Times when the heat is on, where it's difficult at school because nobody wants to talk to you because you're a Christian and you take the Bible seriously. Or where the staff room is a difficult place because of what you believe or because you've made a stand on what the scriptures say in some way.

Or when the media puts pressure on a church or a ministry trying to turn public opinion ever more against the gospel work. In many ways, that's par for the course.

[7 : 27] But we must ask, who is John referring to in verse 13 when he mentions the world? John uses that phrase throughout his writing to mean different things.

At different points, he means the whole world. At other times, it's to refer to the kind of worldly idea that is belonging to this world and not the world to come.

And so it has a moral aspect. And sometimes John uses it as a subset of the whole world. But who are marked by this world. And so I think here in verse 13, we should read the world as the departed. John, I think, is talking about those who have, chapter 2, verse 19, gone out from us. Those who have gone out into the world. Or as chapter 4, verse 1 puts it, false teachers, false prophets who have gone out into the world.

John has been identifying the departed with this world, with darkness. That's what he's been doing throughout this letter.

[8 : 41] And so what John is saying to those who remain, those who abide the apostles, he's saying, don't be surprised that the departed hate you.

Don't be surprised that those who call themselves Christians, that those who claim fellowship with God, hate you. And Jesus, of course, has already spoken such things.

Back in John's gospel, we read, If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I choose you out of the world.

Therefore, the world hates you. And Jesus goes on in John's gospel, just a few verses later, to speak of how the hatred of the world would play out. And this is what he says. They will put you out of the synagogues.

Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. Out of the synagogues and offering service to God.

[9 : 50] Jesus was realistic. He said that the hatred of the world would masquerade as religion. There will be some who have studied the Bible with you.

And who will attend the same conferences as you. Or who have served on a CU committee with you. Who will turn out to be enemies. Who will turn against you in hatred and twist the knife.

Wanting to throw you out of the synagogue. And attacking your faithfulness to the gospel. Do not be surprised. If some who sit in conservative evangelical circles.

Or some who love to talk about expository Bible ministry. Don't be surprised if some of them turn out to hate you. Look back at the poignant example that John has already given us.

Chapter 3 verse 12. Cain. Cain. Cain. Who murdered his own brother. Because his deeds were righteous. They were from the same family.

[10:56] But Cain hated Abel. Because Abel was born of God. And so he murdered him. Now we've known this kind of thing as a church.

When making a costly stand against the denomination that had surrendered the Bible. What was most difficult was the opposition from those who called themselves friends.

Those who claimed to be on the same page. Those who belonged in the same camp or tribe.

Speaking publicly against us. Sticking the boot in. I'm sure some still feel the impact of such things.

Having lost friendships. But this is something that every generation needs to be clear on. If we want to be faithful to the Bible. To be faithful to the gospel passed down to us.

Then John is telling us there will be times when bullets and opprobrium fly our way. From other so-called Christians. There are times that the Bible demands that we must make.

[11:56] Clear what is righteous and what is not. And very often. It is when Christians and churches clarify. And are really clear on what is true.

That problems come. Necessary negatives. Are often deeply unpopular. Because they get rid of the wiggle room. They remove the veneer of unity.

When there isn't really unity. There might be lots of people who can happily say. Jesus is Lord. Oh yes. Of course he's Lord. Yes. I'm a Christian. I'm on board with that. But when the implications of what that means are clarified.

When we make clear that. That means that we're not Lord. That we're not autonomous. When that means that we have to obey him. And that means that we cannot be who we want.

And do what we want. Well then. That's not going to be very popular is it. Lots of people might be happy to say. There's nothing more important than the message of Christ crucified.

[12:55] No greater focus for the church. Oh yes. That's very important. Yes. We're Christians. But when the necessary negatives are added. Well. Can't it turn to hatred?

The proclamation of the gospel is the greatest need. And so that means not. X or Y or Z. And it's the denial of X and Y and Z.

That might unleash hostility. Isn't it? And it might even be from those who would call themselves brothers. It can be very easy for us to find common ground with people.

In talking about things relating to the Bible. Indeed it can be very easy to enjoy getting into the nitty gritty of what it says. But when the Bible ought to prompt a call to action.

To not just be hearers of the word but doers. Well then we might well find. That people who up to that point were friends. Become critics.

[13:52] Or in John's language. Hate us. So friends. Don't be surprised. If your action in trying to contend.

And whatever the ethical issue of the day is. Don't be surprised if your efforts to protect the lives of the unborn. Or your efforts to stand against legalizing euthanasia.

Or your resisting edicts to declare your pronouns in the workplace. Don't be surprised if these things expose hatred. Even from those who call themselves Christians.

We've seen that recently haven't we? With the moderator of one of the Presbyterian denominations in Scotland. Taking aim at Kate Forbes. For her orthodox Bible beliefs. Tweeting her opposition.

Claiming mainstream Christianity has moved on from that. I thought we were past this. Don't be surprised. That those who call themselves Christians.

[14:51] Are disparaging of you. And of our church. When we want to be faithful to the Bible.

Maybe friends will stop talking to you. About anything to do with church. They're just not interested anymore.

Maybe they'll have a dig. It's not that we don't agree with you. It's just the way you do it. Or taking aim because. Oh you're too reformed.

Or you're not reformed enough. Or don't be surprised. If people disown you. Not wanting anything more to do with you. Couldn't you have gone anywhere but there.

John says verse 14. That the true children of God. Have moved from death to life. And it is evident. Because they love the brothers. He says that is you. That is you who abide with us. That is you who continue the apostles. But. Whoever doesn't love the brothers.

[15 : 52] Abides in death. And he's saying that is the departed. John links. Hatred with death. The example of Cain.

And what he says here. And he does that just as the Lord Jesus does. Murder. And hatred. Are linked. They come from the same place. And John is.

Warning us. Preparing us. That the spirit of Cain. Lives on. The departed are like Cain. They've gone out. And they hate you. And when the apostles gospel.

Is edged away from. When. When the apostles gospel. Is edged away from. Then the righteousness. The righteousness of genuine believers. Will prompt rage. In those who have given up in the gospel.

Verse 15. It becomes clear. Those who claim the name Christian. When they see righteousness. And they spit rage.

[16 : 53] Then John says. Eternal life isn't in them. That. Was true of the departed. And John is preparing us.

For that ongoing reality. Well. Owing to this dark world. That is still present. We will face hatred. From those who claim to be the children of God. Don't be surprised. Is John's message. There will be children of the evil one. Masquerading as the children of God. And so he's very careful.

To go on. To make clear. What does that change? What shouldn't that change? For the people of God. And so the rest of this passage. Is taken up. Not with hatred.

But with love. He goes on to say. Secondly. That we're to be loving. Like Christ. In verses 16 to 18. Not loosing like he.

[17 : 50] But loving. Like Christ. The true people of God. Are not overcome by hatred. Responding in kind. Rather the true children of God.

Are given to sacrificial love. Even in. Or perhaps even particularly in. The context of hostility. Now isn't it easy. To be dragged down.

And discouraged. When faced. With that kind of stinging opposition. Wouldn't it be so easy. To become embittered. By the wounds. Inflicted. By those who are once close to us.

There's nothing. That will dampen our enthusiasm. To serve and love people. Quite like being betrayed. By those who were once. Part of us. That's the situation.

The context. That John's writing into. And I wonder if the rest of our passage. Is John recognizing. How hard it can be. To face such opposition. And so he's encouraging the church.

[18 : 49] To not forsake. The very thing. That makes them. What they are. Back in verse 14. John has been clear. That genuine love. Has been present.

And obvious. Those who've remained. And the apostles. Well. John's clear. That they are the real deal. They really do. Love the brothers. But in the context.

Of the hatred. That they can expect. The hatred. That they've. Experienced. From the departed. It's important. To be clear. On the ongoing. Motivation. And model. Of love. And to be clear.

On what it is. That makes us. The true children. Of God. So verse 16. Here is what marks us. Here is love. Here is what it looks like.

It looks like Jesus. It looks like. Laying down our lives. By this we know love. That he laid down his life for us.

[19 : 47] And we ought to lay down our lives. For the brothers. Notice how John puts. Jesus in contrast to Cain. Mention of both Cain and Jesus. Here center around death.

Cain murdered. Because of someone else's righteousness. And of course Jesus died. Because. Because of someone else's. Unrighteousness.

The people of God. Are people. Marked. By love. That. Is the evidence. Of God's seat at work in them. As with Jesus.

So with his people. And that love. Is a love. Which sacrifices. In costly ways. For others. Because we knew. What it is to receive love. From the one. Who sacrificed. By the supreme cost.

And John lands. This in the most. Down to earth of ways. Verse 17. If you have the world's goods. That is. If you have the material means. And you see a brother in need.

[20 : 46] God's love. At work in you. Will prompt you. To do what you can. To help. I think. John is cautioning. That in the face. Of rampant hostility. We mustn't.

Let our hearts. Be hardened. Against our brothers. Wouldn't it be so easy. To edge away. From your precious. Brothers and sisters. In the church family.

When there's. A feeling that. Belonging to the church family. Has brought strife upon you. Or when you've been. Burnt by people. Who you thought. Were brothers or sisters. They've. Turned against you. Wouldn't it be so easy. To recoil. From the church family. That are around you. And think. I can't invest in these relationships anymore. It's too hard. I'll be wounded all over again. Well. Ongoing love. For brothers and sisters. Is life. Not death. That's John's message.

[21 : 42] And the example. That he uses. In verse 17. It seems to be drawn. I think. From Deuteronomy chapter 15.

So it was. Likely. A situation. That was present. In the church. He was writing to. But it's also an example. Laid out. Concretely. In the law of God.

Deuteronomy 15. Says. If among you. One of your brothers. Should become poor. In any of. Your towns. Within your land. That the Lord your God. Is giving you. You shall not.

Harden your heart. Or shut your hand. Against your poor brother. But you shall open your hand. To him. And lend him sufficient. For his needs. Whatever it may be. You shall not.

Harden your heart. Against them. Or as John says. You shall not. Close your heart. In such a situation. To do so. Isn't the fruit. Of God's love.

[22 : 39] Quite the opposite. The way of life. For the redeemed. The way of life. In the promised land. In God's kingdom. In the church. Is to be generous.

Of heart. To one another. That has always. Been the way. From those rescued. Out of Egypt. All the way through. To today. To love.

As we have been loved. Those who belong. To the evil one. Even if they claim. To be Christian. They see faithfulness. And respond with hatred. They see righteousness.

And respond with malice. Those born of God. Who have his love. Abiding in them. They see misfortune. And respond with help. They see need.

Respond with mercy. And so John says. Verse 18. Little children. Let us not love in word. Or talk. But in deed. And truth. Love.

[23 : 34] Loving words. Can be very easy. But loving works. Can be very expensive. It can be easy. To pontificate. About love. But not to practice it.

Edward. Has been very helpfully. Reminding us. From Titus. That godliness. Holiness. Is relational. It's played out. In relationships. And words alone.

Won't sustain relationships. Love that is truth shaped. Is worked out in deeds. Words detached from works. From actions. Well they ring hollow in the end.

Don't they? God's love towards his people. Wasn't simply a declaration. But it was demonstrated. In the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

Verse 16. By this we know love. That he laid down his life for us. That's what marks.

[24 : 33] The people of God. Real love for one another. I am very encouraged. That when I'm in touch. With someone in the church family. Who is in difficulty.

When a loved one's in hospital. Or when a real time of difficulty. Has struck. It's encouraging. That usually when I'm in touch. I'm being told. That some of the church family. Have been helping.

And have been a source of real comfort. Meals have been dropped off. Folks have sent cards. And called. And offered help. All these kinds of things. And they are tangible expressions.

Of concern and love. And we should be encouraged by that. Love in our midst. Not just in word. But in deed and in truth. And friends.

That is the love of God. Abiding in us. John is saying. That in a context of hostility.

[25 : 28] It is more important than ever. That a church perseveres. In that kind of love. Hatred is closer than we think. And so costly love is vital.

And we want to be a church. Don't we? That when a brother or sister are in need. Then we're predisposed. To say yes. When there is genuine need.

Heartache or hardship. Discouragement or disaster. Struggle or strife. Then we respond to the Lord's voice. Beckoning us. To lay ourselves down. To pour ourselves out.

For our Christian brothers and sisters. And we do it. Of course this won't always be convenient. It will be costly. But we mustn't let the hatred we face.

Be a reason to harden ourselves. To one another. All of us. To a greater or lesser degree. Have time and material things. That can be used. To encourage and supply.

[26 : 26] Our brothers and sisters. John says. Don't close your heart. Against your brother or sister. Who is in need. And so. We'll need to practice. And get used to.

All the more. Helping and encouraging. Our church family. So perhaps you. Cherish your day off in the week. Or your. Your one evening in. Of course. Guard that. So that you can.

Keep going in life. Don't. But perhaps. Don't hold on to it. So tightly. That you wouldn't ever. Think about using it. To encourage someone. Who's.

Really up against it. Because they've been. Flying the flag for Jesus. Or. Of course. Be sensible with your money. And plan. And save for the future.

But don't hold on to it. So tightly. That you wouldn't ever. Think about using it. To support someone. In a difficult spot. Or of course.

[27 : 21] Make the most of family occasions. Christmas. Saturday morning. Waffles. Or whatever your. Family's tradition is. Holidays. And things like that. Enjoy them. But perhaps.

Think about inviting someone. In the church. Who's been struggling along. Perhaps quietly grappling. With loneliness. Not having a family of their own. There's some ways.

That we can. Prepare ourselves. To. To show love. To those in need. But let's be prayerfully.

Endeavoring. To be a church. Always growing. In Christlike love.

For one another. Predisposed. To say yes. Prepared. To lay down. Ourselves. For our brothers. And the third thing.

That John tells us. In this passage. Verses 19 to 24. Is that that kind of love. Produces confidence. Costly love. Produces confidence.

[28 : 20] Verses 19 to 24. As we give ourselves. To growing in love. For one another. We will find a growing. Confidence. And reassurance. That God abides in us. These remaining verses.

In this chapter. Are all about. Knowing confidence. Before God. And not condemnation. And the means. Of this confidence. Is in God's commandments.

The commandments. That John often states. As a singular command. To love one another. So look at verse 23. This is his commandment.

That we believe. In the name of his son. Jesus Christ. And love. One another. Just as he has commanded us. Whoever does this. Verse 24.

Abides in God. And God in him. By his spirit. Verse 19 says likewise. By this.

[29 : 19] And I take it. That the this. Means loving. Like Christ. In deed and truth. By this. We shall know. That we are of the truth.

And reassure. Or persuade. Our hearts. Before him. Christ. Like love. Flowing out of us. Towards our Christian brothers and sisters. Is evidence.

Of Christ's work within us. That is a real means. Of assuring us. And reassuring us. Of persuading. Convincing. In. Convincing our hearts.

That before God. We are his children. And that his seed is at work within us. But then in the middle of these verses. John narrows in.

On what our hearts may be doing. So verse 20. Whenever our heart. Condemns us. God is greater than our heart.

[30 : 11] And he knows everything. Well what does John mean here? I take it. That the way our hearts. Might condemn us. Is by seeing a brother in need.

And being tempted to not help. Being tempted to weigh the cost. And think that's too much. Our hearts condemn us. When we harden.

Or close our hearts. Towards our brothers and sisters. When they're in need. And I think John is picking up. The example of Deuteronomy 15 again. Turn back there in your Bibles.

Deuteronomy chapter 15. You can see verse 7.

That Moses has in mind. The heart here. And then verses 9 and 10. Moses mentions the year of release. The seventh year.

[31 : 16] Which is when all debts were forgiven. And obviously if that was approaching. And you helped someone. Then there was a high chance. You would never see it repaid. Or returned. So that's what he's talking about.

In verse 9. Moses says. Take care. Lest there be an unworthy thought. In your heart. And you say. The seventh year. The year of release is near.

And your eye looked grudgingly. On your poor brother. And you give him nothing. And he cried to the Lord against you. And you be guilty of sin. You shall give to him freely.

And your heart shall not be grudging. When you give to him. Because for this. The Lord your God will bless you. In all your work. And in all that you undertake. When our hearts are miserly. And cold and hardened. The Lord is far bigger. Than our hearts. His generosity isn't bound. By our selfishness. He knows everything.

[32 : 16] John's tune is reassuring. And I take it. That when our hearts would condemn us. When we're tempted. To harden them. God knows who we belong to.

God knows who we belong to. And he is greater than our weakness. And he will enable us. To continue pouring ourselves out in love. If like me.

There are occasions. When in a grump. You feel so far. From being able to love your church family. Then remember. The Lord is superior to our hearts.

He is the one who can turn hearts of stone. Into hearts of flesh. It isn't too much for him. To work out within us. The fruit of his love. Even if it's little by little.

And so verse 21. If our hearts. If our heart does not condemn us. That is when we do love one another. Then we have confidence.

[33 : 17] And verse 22. Whatever we ask of him. We receive from him. When we pray. He hears and answers. I think what John is saying. Is that when we do show costly love.

When we do. Look to our brother. And respond. From the seeds. Of God's work within us. We will be unable to grow more and more.

To do it more and more. Whatever we ask of God. We will receive. This isn't a kind of genie in a bottle idea. Well if I love my brothers.

Then God will give me the Lamborghini. I always want it. No I take it. That the more we do what pleases him. The more we keep his commandments. The more we will grow in doing so.

And the more confidence we will have before him. As Moses says. Because for this. The Lord your God will bless you.

[34 : 18] In all your work. And in all that you undertake. Friends. It is never too late. For us to take steps. Towards our Christian brothers and sisters. It is never too late.

To begin laying down our lives. For our brothers. As you've been coming along to church. For years. But only ever wanted to remain on the periphery.

Slipping in. Slipping out. Not really talking to folks. Sitting at the back. Not bothering with brothers and sisters. It isn't too late. Whenever our heart condemns us.

God is greater than our heart. Whose who belong to the Lord. He will work love within them.

Who will help us to do it. Well as we close. It does not need to be a crushing thing. When hatred comes our way. From surprising places.

[35 : 19] Because we have one another. And as we give ourselves ever more to our church family. The Lord will be pleased to give us a growing assurance. That we are his.

Us in him. And he in us. And we shall learn all the more. That in him is all the treasure that we'll ever need. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father. Grant us we pray. An abundance of grace. So that it would be a delight. To us.

To love. Costly brothers and sisters. In costly ways. And teach us with every passing week. What it is to love like Jesus. So that we might be a persistent encouragement.

To one another. In the face of the fiery darts. Of the evil one. And so Lord. We ask that you would make our church. An oasis of love.

[36 : 25] In this dark world. And we ask it in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.