

THURSDAY 13 October 2022 "Light & Darkness"

(1 John 2:9-11)

Good morning my 'Walking with Jesus' friends,

I wonder if you've ever lived in a part of the world where you can watch big 'thunderstorms' develop far away on the horizon, and move toward you across the sky? Those small clouds grow larger and larger, darker and darker, then before long the wind starts to swirl around you, lightning starts to flash, and then booming thunder, loud enough to rattle the windows and thump your chest. Soon comes the rain, a penetrating, pelting rain and raining so hard you can't see 50 feet in front of you! Or maybe the wind is blowing so hard the rain is horizontal not vertical! Do you know those types of powerful thunderstorms? Have you ever been caught in something like this, and it was so ferocious you were terrified?

Let's rejoin the apostle John as he is writing the first of his three letters. John is describing something like one of those thunderstorms, only not a weather event but rather a spiritual darkness.

John is writing about really important things. *He's helping us consider some of the tangible evidence that should distinguish authentic Christians from those who have not yet experienced the life transforming work of God.* Visible evidence is important because anyone can make almost any claim about what is happening invisibly inside them. But John insists there should be tangible, visible evidence which validates the work of God in a person.

Yesterday we looked at the **'love & light'** part of 1 John 2:9-11 **"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them."** We understand that John is doing as Jesus did and using the words **"light"** and **"darkness"** to contrast things of God and things of the devil. Yesterday we focused on John's description of those who are living in the **'love & light'** of God, as the evidence of God's work in them.

Today let's look at the darkness side of these verses. John wants us to understand there is an opposite reality. *There are those people who claim to have a relationship with God but who do NOT evidence it by their attitudes or behavior.* Specifically, John is talking about the contrast between love or hatred for other Christians.

When John uses the phrase **'brother and sister'** in this case he's not talking about human siblings but rather about people who have trusted Jesus for salvation from their sin condemnation and been 'born again' through the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, and then been adopted by God the Father into His family. *Those Christians are spiritual **'brothers and sisters'**.*

Yesterday we discussed the amazing miracle of God awakening His love, in His people, for each other. It's very similar to the love in a healthy family. For those of you who have experienced it, it's wonderful isn't it?

But as we see in John's words, there are some people who claim to be Christians, but they do not experience joy or enthusiasm when meeting another person who also claims to be a follower of Jesus! Why not? What's missing? John wants us to consider it may be that even though the person claims to be a Christian perhaps the Holy Spirit has not done God's life transforming work in them, so the Holy Spirit does not live within them and therefore there is not a spiritual connection between them and another person who is an authentic Christian. If in fact rather than love, there is hatred John says ***"Anyone who hates their 'brother or sister' is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going because the darkness has blinded them."*** (1 John 2:11)

Now, that's very strong language John is using isn't it my friends? John is not describing an absence of love; John is using the word **'hate'** here. So, when a person who claims to be a Christian does NOT feel any particular love for other Christians, they should ask themselves why! *But what about the person claiming to be a Christian who actually hates other Christians? How is that even possible?*

Now you and I both know there is great danger in sweeping generalizations, so let's be careful here. *We also know emotions such as **'love'** and **'hate'** are usually reactions to something. They are very subjective feelings.* So, if a person actually **'hates'** another person, before we jump to conclusions about their spiritual condition, we need to ask 'why'? What is causing such a strong emotional reaction that the word **"hate"** describes what they feel toward another person? I sense John is not talking here about personality conflict, nor about response to abuse or deep wounding. *John is talking about a person who hates another person PRIMARILY because the person they hate is or claims to be a Christian!* There are many places in the world where "hatred toward Christians" is prevalent! Sometimes that hatred is rooted in what they have been taught about Christians since they were children. Sometimes hatred toward Christians is demanded by their particular religious traditions or teachings.

But sometimes the hatred aimed at a Christian is similar to what Jesus Himself and His apostles experienced. *The hatred that killed them was a hatred for what they were teaching, the Gospel of the outrageous love of God for sinful humanity which moved God to send His Son Jesus to die an atonement death so God could forgive sin.*

Sometimes it's hatred toward the Christian claim that every person is a sinner, born with a sin nature, and we can do nothing to fix our sin problem nor atone for it!

Sometimes it's a hatred toward Jesus for saying **"I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to God the Father except through me."** (John 14:6) Sometimes it's a hatred toward God's warning: **"Whoever believes in the Son of God has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son of God will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them."** (John 3:36) *So in your part of the world, in your city, in your extended family, do you see any evidence of 'hatred' toward people who claim to be or are known to be Christians? If so, why?* What motivates such extreme attitudes toward those Christians? Here is an even more pointed question built on what John has written: *Do you know anyone who claims to be a Christian, but they hate other Christians?* That's the person John is talking about and John claims two profound things about that person...

1. **"They walk around in the darkness..."** (1 John 2:11) That's what Jesus was talking about when He said: **"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people love darkness instead of light, because their deeds are evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it will be plainly seen that what they do is done in the sight of God."** (John 3:19-21) You and I live in a world of suffocating, evil darkness that permeates minds and hearts, and shapes attitudes and prejudices. *Hatred is bred in this darkness.*

2. John also wrote this about those hate filled people: **"They do not know where they are going because the darkness has blinded them."** (1 John 2:11) We all probably know some blind people or perhaps those, like my father, who are losing their eyesight due to macular degeneration or some other visual disease. *But do you know anyone who has perfectly good eyesight but is living so deep in the deceitful, all-consuming darkness of our world that the choices they make, the way they think, the things they say, are all so self-destructive and wounding of others that you conclude they are morally, spiritually, ethically blinded?* They desperately need the deliverance out of this darkness that only Jesus can accomplish. But oh, how terrible if they claim they are already a Christian, yet every evidence you observe in their life is that they are blinded by the devil's darkness!

Let's ponder that my dear friends because this is a 'darkness caused blindness' that is pervasive in our world. *Millions of people believe they are 'Christians' and many attend church regularly, some perhaps even pray often, yet their minds and hearts are blinded by the devil's darkness and they experience an emotional dislike, even a hatred, when they encounter a Holy Spirit filled, authentic, born again, Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ! That reaction is a spiritual evidence of the devil's blinding darkness in one person encountering the Holy Spirit's light in another person!*

It's what happened at the stoning of Stephen the Deacon as recorded in Acts 7:51-60. It happened when hate filled Saul dragged Christians out of their homes to persecute them. in Acts 8:1-3. It happened when Jewish leaders, filled with hate, demanded the

death of Jesus, in John 19:1-16. It happened when religious leaders in Lystra stirred up the people and they stoned the apostle Paul and left him for dead, in Acts 14:8-19.

But as we close today, let's celebrate that just as the darkness makes every effort to extinguish the light, **God will not allow the darkness to prevail!** From the martyrdom of Stephen rose up a mighty spiritual revival in Jerusalem which spread to the Samaritans in Acts 8 and the Gentiles in Caesarea in Acts 10! Saul the persecutor encountered the risen Jesus, and he became Paul the missionary apostle! And it's been happening around the world ever since. From the Boxer Rebellion massacres of 1900, in China, came what many believe to be the largest and most passionate movement of Christians the world has ever seen.

So, friends, look closely at your city... what is the Holy Spirit of God doing there as He empowers authentic followers of Jesus to push back the darkness? Let's praise Jesus today for what HE is doing all around the world as He builds the movement of His followers, and they bring His light to their corner of the world. And here's a song that celebrates this powerful and wonderful reality...

Today's Scripture is 1 John 2:9-11.