

**Twelve Lessons**

*on*

# **Epistles of John**

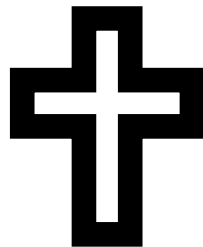
**Volume II**

**(I John 3:11 - III John 1:14)**

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**\$6.00**

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## **THE CONTRAST OF SONSHIP – LESSON 1**

### **I John 3:11-18**

**Introduction:** In verse ten, a contrast is made between the children of God and the children of the devil. There are basically two spiritual families, two spiritual fathers. Either you are a child of God or a child of the devil. Either God is your father or the devil is.

1. If we are sons of God, then we will be ***like our father*** (vs. 4-10). If you are a child of the devil, then you will be like your father. It is natural for a son to be like his father (vs. 7).
2. If we are the sons of God, we will ***love our family*** (vs. 11-24). If you are of the devil, you will love his family. It is natural for a son to love his family (vs. 14).

### **Lesson Goals:**

1. To contrast the attitude of the world and the church toward “*the brethren*.”
2. To prove, by our attitude toward the brethren, whether we are a child of God or not.
3. To emphasize the importance of Biblical, balanced love in action; not in word only.

### **Definition of Important Words/Phrases:**

1. Sonship – According to Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, the state of being a son, or having the relation of a son; filiation, the character of a son.
2. Paradox – According to Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, a tenet or proposition contrary to received opinion, or seemingly absurd, yet true in fact.

**I. THE PROOF OF SONSHIP** – I John 3:14 – “*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*”

#### **A. The Command** – vs. 11 – “*For this is the message...that we should love one another.*”

1. This phrase “love one another” appears five times in the next two chapters of this epistle (3:11,23; 4:7,11,12), proving the emphasis of sonship is upon loving one another.
2. It is “*the message*” – a proclamation, a command, an order. It is not up for discussion, we have been commanded or ordered to love one another. The verb tense is present subjunctive, which implies continuous or repeated action performed by the subject.
3. The word “beginning” implies it was not some new teaching from John, but something they had been told from the commencement. A child should not have to be commanded to love his family, it should come natural.

#### **B. The Conflict** – vs. 13 – “*Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*”

1. Illustrated – Cain and Abel were brothers, but that does not mean Cain loved Abel. Cain serves as a negative illustration of what brotherly love is not.
  - a. He slew his brother because his father was the devil (“wicked one”). Even though they were in the same physical family, they were not in the same spiritual family.
  - b. Remember, Cain was not an atheist. He actually was very religious. Sometimes the conflict is with those who profess to be brothers, but in reality they are children of the devil. They are “in the church” but not “in the family.”
2. Explained – We should not “*marvel*” at the world’s hatred toward us. There has been a family feud going on since the beginning.

#### **C. The Contrast** – vs. 14 – “*...we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*”

1. Life and Death – Men are separated into 2 categories: the living and the dead. As it is in the physical realm, so it is in the spiritual realm.
  - a. “We” is the Christian in contrast to the unsaved that are called “the world.”
  - b. The word “passed” means to pass over from one place to another, to migrate. The verb is in the perfect tense, meaning a past act having permanent, continuing results. It is not like the migration of birds that fly south for the winter only to migrate north for the summer.
  - c. It is the same word translated “depart” in John 7:3 “*His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea...*” It is a departure from one place to another.
  - d. Col. 1:13 “*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.*” “Translated” – remove from one place to another (Thayer’s dictionary).
2. Love and Hatred – The question is not, can a Christian hate his brother, but rather, is an individual a

Christian if he continues to hate his brother? The act is not in question here, rather, the professing Christian.

- a. The *attitude* of hatred is seen as equal to the *act* of murder. Someone who continually harbors hatred in his heart is just as guilty of murder in the eyes of God as the one who carries out the act.
- b. Jesus referred to this principle in Matthew chapter five; the action being an outgrowth of the attitude. He spoke of this in verse 28 “*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*” Murder is simply hatred in action – “*whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.*”
- c. In 3:9, we found that a person who practices sin is not saved. Here, a person who practices hatred is not saved (“...*no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*”).

**II. THE PRACTICE OF SONSHIP** – I John 3:18 – “*My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.*”

**A. Brotherly Love** – vs. 16 – “*we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*”.

1. The Pattern – vs. 16 – Our perception is based on His pattern. “Ought” – To owe, to be indebted for. Our sacrifice should be patterned after His. He gave His life willingly, wholly.
  - a. We owe the World – The Gospel
  - b. We owe God – Obedience
  - c. We owe the Saints – Love
2. The Paradox – vs. 17 – A statement that is self-contradictory.
  - a. “*Seeth his brother have need*” – The word “seeth” has the idea of deliberate contemplation. Like the priest and the Levite in the parable of the good Samaritan, there is direct knowledge.
  - b. “*Shutteth up his bowels of compassion*” – Like the priest and the Levite, the problem was not the fact they did not see the problem, it was the fact they did nothing about it. The word “shutteth” has the idea of shutting the door and snapping the lock. This person sees the need and yet bolts the door of his heart shut to compassion.
  - c. “*How dwelleth the love of God in him*” – This is the paradox: that one could see a brother with a need, and at the same, not be moved with compassion to meet that need. The thought was absurd.

**B. Balanced Love** – vs. 18 – “...*in deed and in truth.*” Someone said, “actions speak louder than words”.

1. It is not hard to see the need (vs. 17 “seeth”) or say something about it (vs. 18 “word...tongue”). It is hard sometimes to sacrifice to supply that need. There must be a balance between our words and actions.
2. There must also be a balance between the tongue and the truth. The word “truth” speaks of a genuine concern, not just a superficial verbal response. Balanced love is giving love, genuine love.