

The First Epistle of John

...so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1John 1:3)

1John 4:7-8

Review

Where is John writing from?

What heresy was he addressing?

What flavor of Gnosticism was John specifically dealing with?

What did the heretics teach?

How does John deal with this false teaching?

1John 1:6-10

Someone read 1Jn 4:1-6

Someone else read vv7-10

Recently, a group of professional pollsters conducted a survey, which asked the question, "What do you love most in life?" The choices were 1) Children; 2) Animals; 3) God; 4) the United States; 5) their enemies; and 6) Themselves.

What do you think the results were...

92% said Children!

86% said God

75% said the U.S.

66% said animals

Only 33% acknowledged loving themselves

And dead last was one's enemies, only 20%

What this survey most likely reveals is that Americans don't know themselves very well, or lie when they take a survey! I think for most Americans, most would put "themselves" in the #1 position, children in the #2 slot, or perhaps animals, and the US, God, and enemies would take up the rear.

Someone read vv7-8

Who are Christians supposed to love?

The Christian faith has always emphasized two vital things – truth and love. Jesus Christ was the ultimate expression of both in perfect balance. He was the full expression of truth (Jn 14:6) and He demonstrates the Father's truth (jn 17:17; jn 18:37) ; and He was the full expression of love (Jn 15:12) and demonstrated the love of the Father (Jn 15:9-12; Rom 5:8).

Do you know what Paul literally said when he wrote "Speaking the truth in love?" (Eph 4:15).

“Truthing in love” ‘Truthing’ has become “speaking or teaching the truth in love. But it was originally “truthing” Living the truth in love. This is what Christianity is to be.

And how does the Enemy seek to overthrow the Christian faith, what is one of his methods?

He merely has to nudge us toward one or the other, towards love or truth.

Love without truth is commonly known as liberalism. Liberalism is blind to the harsh realities of sin and evil in human life, with its glowing proclamations of sweetness and light.

To go the other direction – to emphasize truth without love – produces a cold, hard, legalism which though it professes the right creed, is just as empty of genuine Christianity as is the former.

One often comes across Christians that have been sorely tested by some vicious attack from certain so-called Christians who are self-appointed defenders of the faith and “accusers of the brethren” (cf, Rev 12:10).

Gene Edwards wrote a book with the provocative title, “Crucified by Christians.” In it he details several stories of Christians who have been abused by those who claimed to be their brothers. He gives comfort to those who are going through trials like these, but teaching that one eventually has a “Gethsemane moment” when you finally give your trial over to God and surrender your will to His.

You really have to wonder if these libertines and legalists are genuinely saved.

Read vv7-8 again.

Notice that this does not say “Love one another so long as they are lovable.” We are not only to love those who are nice, congenial, clever, or who love us. We are simply to love “one another.” We are to love, especially when the other person has been offensive to us.

Love is an interest in and a concern for another person, just because he is a person, and for no other reason.

In the phrase, “Love one another,” the word “Love” in the Greek means continuously love. Don’t stop loving! How can we do that?

The love originates “from God.” Even our human love have its root in God.

“a reflection of something in the Divine nature itself”
(Brooke).

In fact, God *is* this kind of love, God is love. Therefore, wherever the life of God is present, that love is found. And if that love is NOT found, the life of God is not present.

This is a very simple and straightforward proposition – isn’t it? It is no good claiming to know God if the love of God is not found in your life. That is not God’s life, that is not God’s love.

John’s argument is: If the life of God is present in us, then the love of God will be there too.

Notice that John practices what he preaches. What is the first word of v7?

This brings us to one of the most profound declarations in all of Scripture: “for God is love.” As John Stott writes in his commentary:

“This is the most comprehensive and sublime of all biblical affirmations of God’s being.”

In the Greek, this statement is not “convertible” (i.e., while God is all that love is, love is not all that God is [cf., 1Jn 1:5; Jn 34:24]).

No matter how difficult it may be for us to grasp, the fountain of all God’s activity stems from this self-giving love. Even His judgments, His condemnations, arrive from love. As Dodd writes:

“If He judges, He judges in love.”

Yet, if He judges in love, he also loves in justice. He who is love, is fire as well (Heb 12:28-29, cf. Deut 4:24). Far from condoning sin, His love has found a way to expose it (because He is light) and to consume it (because He is fire) without destroying the sinner, but rather saving him.

To lack love and claim to be born of God is like saying you can be intimate with a foreigner whose language we cannot speak. It to fail to manifest the nature of Him whom we claim as our Father (“born of God”) and our Friend (“knows God”).

Love is as much a sign of the New Birth as is righteousness (2:29).

And how does God manifest His love for us?