

Excerpts from Life-Study of 1 John,

Message 27

**THE VIRTUES OF
THE DIVINE BIRTH
TO PRACTICE THE DIVINE LOVE (1)**

Bible Verses:

1 John 3:10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest. Everyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, neither he who does not love his brother.

14 We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. He who does not love abides in death.

In order to practice the divine love as a virtue of the divine life, we need the divine life and the divine Spirit. The divine life is the divine seed that we all have within our regenerated spirit. In addition to the divine life that has been sown as

the divine seed into our being, we also have the divine Spirit within our spirit. The divine life and the divine Spirit are the “capital” within us that enables us to practice the divine love. The divine life is the source, and the divine Spirit is the One who actually carries out the matter of loving others. The divine love is our daily living as the expression of the divine life carried out by the divine Spirit.

The divine life and the divine Spirit are basic factors for the practice of the divine love. With the divine life and by the divine Spirit, we can have a love that is divine and not merely human. This divine love in the daily living of the children of God is an evidence that we have both the divine life and the divine Spirit.

In 3:10b John says, “Everyone who does not practice righteousness is not out of God, and he who does not love his brother.” It is a serious thing for John to say that everyone who does not love his brother is not out of God. As children of God, we certainly are of God and even out of God. Because we are out of God, we surely have God’s life and God’s Spirit in us. Spontaneously, we live a life of loving the brothers. However, if

someone does not have such a love, this is an evidence that he has neither the divine life nor the divine Spirit. Hence, there is a serious question concerning whether such a one is a child of God, born of Him. Loving the brothers is a strong evidence that we are out of God, having God's life and enjoying God's Spirit.

In verse 12 John continues, "Not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his works were evil, and those of his brother righteous." In verse 12 John uses two flesh brothers, Cain and Abel, as an illustration. Although these brothers were of the same parents, one of them became a child of God, and the other was a child of the devil. We may find this difficult to believe. We may wonder how two brothers born of the same parents and living in the same environment could be so different, with one being the devil's child and the other becoming God's child.

The fact that Cain was a child of the devil is proved by his hating his brother and slaying him. This indicates that Cain did not have either the life of God or the Spirit of God. Why did Cain

hate his brother? He hated him because he had the hating life of Satan in him. Why did Cain kill Abel? He killed him because he had in him the evil nature of Satan. What Cain had in him was the devil's life, the devil's nature, and an evil spirit. Abel, however, was altogether different. Today also those born of the same parents and raised in the same environment may become absolutely different. One may become a child of God and the other be a child of the devil.

In 3:14 John says, "We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. He who does not love abides in death." The word in 1 John 3:14 is quite similar to the word spoken by the Lord Jesus quoted by John in his Gospel: "Truly, truly, I say to you, He who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life, and does not come into judgment but has passed out of death into life" (5:24). John's word brings us back to the fall in the garden of Eden. After man was created, he was put before two trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

When we repented of our sins and believed in the Lord Jesus, we were saved. Simultaneously,

we were regenerated. To be regenerated actually means to receive the tree of life, from which mankind was cut off through Adam's fall. When Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, he received death into him and lost the opportunity to receive the tree of life. But the opportunity of receiving the tree of life has been recovered through Christ's redemption. At the time we repented and believed in the Lord Jesus, that opportunity was opened to us. By repenting and believing, spontaneously we received the divine life into us, and at that very moment we passed out of death into life.

If you consider your salvation experience, you will realize that when you were saved and regenerated, you passed out of death into life. Because we all passed out of death into life when we believed in the Lord Jesus and received Him as our Savior, a great change in life followed. We began to live another life, a life of righteousness and love. It became our desire to be righteous and to love the children of God. This is not merely an outward change; it is the passing out of death into life. Therefore, when we love the brothers in the Lord, this love is an evidence that

we have passed out of death into life.

If someone does not love the brothers but instead hates them, this is an evidence that this one remains in the death that came into mankind through Adam's fall. Because death entered into mankind long ago, we were born into that death. But when we repented and believed, we passed out of death into the divine life. Because we have passed out of the death of the tree of knowledge into the life of the tree of life, we have had a change and now live a life of righteousness and love.

Read the verses and footnotes online: <https://text.recoveryversion.bible/>

Read the complete message online: <https://www.ministrybooks.org/>

Note: This version is not intended to be printed as material for pursuit during the small group gathering. Instead, it is to be used as additional reference for brothers and sisters who want to prepare in advance for fellowship on the message. We include here notes from the commentaries of the brothers in the life-study radio program. The points from these commentaries can help enrich our understanding and, eventually, our fellowship with the saints on the selected portions of the life-study message. We still recommend that, if possible, the saints still listen to the [audio message](#) in addition to reading the [life-study message](#) for personal pursuit and for preparation for small group gatherings. We also wish to point out that these notes have not been fully polished.

[Commentary]:

Introduction

[MM]: When the believers in Christ are born again, at the time of their salvation, the divine seed is sown into their being. This seed is the divine life, and the divine life has the divine nature. This is Matt Miller with John Pester, and the title of today's life-study from 1 John is The Virtues of the Divine Birth to Practice the Divine Love. John, we're covering 1 John 3, verses 10-15 today. Could you give our listeners a brief introduction of what they can expect during the next half hour?

[JP]: Well, Matt, this is a marvelous message related to the divine birth with the divine life and the divine love. The divine birth is a divine seed, and this seed is God himself. And this God who is born into every believer is a God of love. And consequently, there is the possibility for all of the believers to practice this divine virtue of divine love.

We really need to have the realization that the divine love that John is speaking about comes from God himself and even is God himself. It's not something that we manufacture. It's not something that we work up in our own self-effort. The divine love that John is speaking about is the agape love, which is God himself. The only word that John uses for love in this entire epistle is agape, which refers to God himself as the divine love, the divine source. And so if we as believers realize that we have the capacity to love because the God of love is dwelling within us as a divine seed, we have a clear picture of what it means to fellowship and practice these virtues.

[MM]: That's a good introduction, John. We have to see the divine birth as the basis for our being able to love. And we've got a good life-study today with some good verses. I think some of these verses that we're going to cover in chapter 3 are ones that people just skip over. So I hope they'll stay with us because I think there's some new light, new inspiration for them in today's life-study.

Let me read chapter 3, verse 10. "In this, the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest. Everyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, neither he who does not love his brother." Let's go to Witness Lee for the life-study printed message number 27 from 1 John.

Part 1

[MM]: John, everyone who doesn't love his brother is not of God. I mean, this is quite serious. Witness Lee just said this is quite serious. We're touching something here quite serious. Why don't you develop this a little bit?

[JP]: I think I'd like to begin by going back to an observation that you made at the beginning of the program, that this is a chapter and this is a portion of 1 John that we often skip over. And one of the reasons we skip over is because it's such a serious matter, and our experience is so limited in many instances that when we read these words, many, many believers come under very serious condemnation because they have experiences of hating a brother or not liking someone. And so when they read these verses that says anyone who does not love his brother is not of God, it brings them into a situation where there's some extreme condemnation because they begin to question whether or not they really are a believer because how can they as a believer, having been born again, how can they hate somebody?

And so it's quite serious, and I think it's something that needs to be addressed. And I think Witness Lee addresses it in a very good way by pointing out and by stressing to the people that he was speaking to, by stressing the fact that the love that John is talking about is the divine love. It's not the human love that we work up. We have to see this distinction. And when that divine love is operating in our life in a way of fellowship, there is some love toward the brothers that wasn't there. And when that life is not operating in the flow of the divine fellowship, sometimes we do have experiences where we don't like the brothers, but that's not necessarily an indication that we're not a believer. But it's quite serious. And so when we see these verses, sometimes they're very hard to read because it causes us to question our salvation.

[MM]: Well, I've got to put you on the spot then, John, and ask you, how can we say that a believer is still a believer if they don't love the brothers?

[JP]: I think it comes back to this word practice. And it relates to the whole understanding of the fellowship of the divine life. John talks about those who do not practice righteousness are not of God. And that word practice means habitual way, in a way that you refuse to separate yourself from the sinful practices, the sinful acts of your former manner of living. You just continue on in that way.

A person that habitually practices unrighteousness, you have to question whether or not that person has genuinely received the Lord. And it's the same way in the divine life. If a person is habitually hating the brothers, there's just a visceral hatred within that person for brothers, a particular brother, or brothers in general, you have to question whether or not that person has been genuinely regenerated. On the other hand, if there is a situation and a circumstance where there's a kind of momentary lapse into discord or hatred, that's not necessarily a sign that you don't have the divine life. It's a sign that at that moment in time, you are not abiding in the flow of the divine fellowship.

I think it's very important that it says that "he who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." That word abiding refers to a kind of continuous situation of fellowship with the Triune God. When we're in fellowship with the Triune God, the eternal life is abiding in us, living in us, there is love toward the brothers. But when we momentarily fall out of that fellowship, there can be instances where we hate the brothers, where we don't love the brothers. And that's just a sign that we need to get back into the divine fellowship. It's not a sign that we don't have the divine life at all.

[MM]: Well, the burden in John was to bring the disciples into the divine fellowship. And in that fellowship, there's a light. So in the light of the fellowship, we get exposed when we don't love the brothers. And it exposes us, and that's why you have that cycle of life that we talked about in 1 John 1. And the very next thing that comes after the light is the confession of the sins and the cleansing of the blood. And when we get back into that cycle of fellowship, then the divine love spontaneously rises up within us. And the person that we were momentarily at odds with, all of a sudden, he becomes dear and precious to us. And the problem is, is with the ones that John's referring to in chapter 3 who do not have this cycle of life and this light. They don't have the light, so they can habitually hate the brothers. And this is what I think we're talking about.

So maybe we've belabored the point a little bit, but let's go on. I think this next portion, John, is especially enlightening. And I know it was to me because it's going to talk about the situation with Cain. And I think this is one of those verses people just skip right over. But Witness Lee doesn't do that in his life-study. Let me read the verse. It's chapter 3, verses 11 and 12: "For this is the message which you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his works were evil and his brothers righteous." Let's go back to Witness Lee.

Part 2

[MM]: John, Witness Lee has really taken a picture here, just a few words. And it's like blown it up,

magnified what the Apostle John is saying and bringing out that there is two categories of people. There are those who are born of God, those who are not, those who have God's life and those who don't, those who love and those who hate. It's like the whole world and the church, the Christians and the unbelievers. An amazing picture. I think we need to spend a few minutes to develop it here.

[JP]: I think what's very interesting about this point is that the Apostle John picks up a central point in the Old Testament. And he uses it to illustrate his point here in his epistles related to the divine birth. Because it's very instructive that he says that Cain was of the evil one. In other words, Cain's actions came out of a source. It wasn't just happenstance that he hated his brother and killed him. He was living and moving and operating out of an evil source. And that source was the life of the devil himself. And that life is a life that hates. It's a life that murders. It's a life that kills. And Cain's entire source, his entire being, was rooted in that evil, satanic nature.

Abel, on the other hand, had a different source. His source was from God. And he had a divine source. And he had a capacity to love. And John uses these two people to illustrate those who are regenerated and those who are unregenerated.

I think it's very instructive to note what Paul says in Ephesians chapter 2. He says that before we believed, we were by nature children of wrath. That hatred comes out of our nature. And a believer has a different nature. He has the divine life with the divine nature. And it has the capacity to love. And so John uses these two people in the Old Testament to illustrate the difference between unregenerated people and regenerated people. There is a whole world of people that are unregenerated, that do not have the life of God. And they're really only capable of one thing, hatred. And those who believe, they have the capacity to love because they have the divine life.

[MM]: I like the Apostle John's follow-up word there that Witness Lee brought out at the end that he said in verse 13, "Do not marvel, brothers, if the world hates you." It's almost like you should expect this.

[JP]: You know, in this day and age, everyone wants everyone to love one another. And if we don't feel that we're being loved by everyone, we feel that something is wrong with us. But really, John has a completely different view. He said, the normal situation, if you're in the fellowship of the divine life and in the flow of the divine life, the reality will be is that the world will hate you because there's just no fellowship between light and darkness. There is no comity between hatred and love. And the world is, by nature, a place full of hatred because it lies in the evil one. And because of that, it is normal. It's really a normal situation to be hated. And it's not a strange thing. We shouldn't marvel that people hate us because we're in two completely different realms.

[MM]: So the believers in the Lord almost need to wonder and be concerned if everyone does love one another.

[JP]: If everyone does love you, then you have to wonder how much of the divine life is being testified in your life. It's a kind of a practical barometer. That is true.

[MM]: Well, let's go on to the final section with Witness Lee today. It's in verse 14: "We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers. He who does not love abides in death." Here's Witness Lee for the conclusion of today's life-study.

Conclusion

[MM]: John, this is a grand verse to pass out of death and into life. I want to read a little portion from the life-study, and I'm going to give a phone number at the end of the program if the listeners would like to get a copy of the printed life-study, which goes into much more detail than we can cover in this radio program. But it's kind of like a summary. The last paragraph of this particular life-study, number 27, says, "John's intention is to show us that through the divine birth, the divine seed has been sown into our being. This seed is the divine life, and the divine life has the divine nature. Furthermore, we

have received the divine spirit to carry out whatever is in the divine life and the divine nature.” So, we have the divine life, we have the divine nature, and we have the divine spirit to carry out what's in that nature. And it's such a wonderful picture. This is the life that we're brought out of death and into this life. But it seems like, how can there be problems then? How can you have a problem when you have all this divine life, divine nature, you have the spirit to carry out what's in the nature? Yet, I think many listening today are thinking, well, I have that experience once in a while, but a lot of time I don't. What's wrong with me?

[JP]: Well, you know, I think even up until this point, I have always considered this verse, “they have passed out of death into life,” as a kind of a once-and-for-all transaction that occurred when I was regenerated. But I think John has a deeper understanding of this in that it is possible and necessary for a Christian to daily, experientially, hourly, minute-by-minute, in the divine fellowship to pass out of death into life.

Christians are unique people. We have two natures. We have the divine life with a divine nature. We still have the fallen, sinful nature within us. And daily, we're like Adam in front of two trees. We daily have to choose. We daily have to decide, do we want to pass out of death into life, or do we want to remain in a situation of death? An unbeliever, an unregenerated person, he only has one nature, the fallen, sinful nature that causes him to habitually sin and to commit sins. But a believer has two natures. A believer has the fallen nature, and he also has the divine nature. And that divine nature comes with the divine spirit, with its capacity to act out the divine love and exhibit it in a daily way.

And so to pass from death into life means to daily be in the fellowship of the divine life, to allow the divine life and divine nature to operate and bring out these virtues of the divine love. This is what is wonderful about being a Christian, is that we actually have a choice. An unbeliever has no choice, but a Christian actually has a choice, and they can live according to the divine life and the divine nature. If occasionally we don't live according to that divine life and divine nature and fall back to our fallen, sinful self, there will be acts of hatred and uncharitable, unkind things that emanate from our being. But if we are in the fellowship of the divine life, we will pass from death into life, and in that passing out of death into life, there will be love for the brothers. This is a marvelous capital that only Christians have. We have the divine life with the divine spirit, and out of that comes the divine love and the divine righteousness.

[MM]: And it really seems like it's a key, this passing out of death and into life. I really hope that some of our listeners, as they're listening today, whatever experience they're in, it would be something that they could pass out of death and into life.

[JP]: We should pray, Lord, may I pass from death to life today.

[MM]: You know, there's a phrase repeatedly found in the Old Testament, “it came to pass.” And so whatever situation you're in, it came to you so you could pass out of death and into life.

[JP]: Praise the Lord.