



5/26/26

What are obstacles to relational oneness? Lack of love and righteousness. Does anyone wake up and say, "I think I'll just make the choice to hate my husband or my parent or my friend"? Or does anyone wake up and say, "I really like to do what is repulsive to God"? Surely, no believer would ever say that. So how do we fall into the trap of hatred and unrighteousness? Today's passage will help us see it.

*Blessings,
Jonna*

1 John 3:7-15

The thing is, Lord, I need Your help. My natural tendency is to do two things. 1. To refuse to look at my own heart. 2. To blame others for what's in my heart. Please reveal to me where I'm being deceived and help me to do what 1 John 1:9 says to do... to confess my guilt AND receive Your forgiveness and Your cleansing of my unrighteousness. I cannot cleanse myself... and forgiving myself is not what I need. I need YOUR forgiveness. YOU'RE the King and Judge. Just as a murderer can forgive himself but still be sentenced to prison for life, it's Your forgiveness that sets me free.

Vs. 7-8 ~ "Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as He is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."

This starts out, "Little children (I love that John calls us that), let no one deceive you." The Greek meaning, I think, gives even a little more clarity to this. It says, "Let no one LEAD YOU ASTRAY." Someone who deceives me doesn't just lie to me. That person leads me away from truth... from the Lord... from my source of love, righteousness, peace, joy, and hope. Deception grows hatred, evil thoughts and actions, anxiety, frustration, and hopelessness. But the person being deceived doesn't realize what's happening. The deceiver uses flattery, rationalization,

and self justification to get me to drift away from the truth. Let me not be MORE deceived, though. The deceiver could not lead me astray if selfish desires weren't ruling my heart.

I know this because Jesus was tempted by the deceiver, and He never sinned. Someone could say... and many have said... "Yes, but Jesus is God. Of course, He didn't sin. I'm not Jesus." That's true. But first, the whole transformation process of sanctification is to make me more and more like Jesus. And second, I can look at many followers of Jesus (like Paul and John) who were willing to give up their lives rather than be led astray. O Lord, please make that so in me!!!

What is the evidence that I'm not being deceived? My righteousness. The more I'm abiding in the Lord, the more righteous I become. Along with that righteousness, James 3 and Hebrews 12 say, comes peace. Who doesn't want peace???

The question is, am I PRACTICING righteousness or am I PRACTICING sin? The key word here is "practice." The path of righteousness is headed toward the Lord. The path of sin is headed, sadly, toward the devil. He has been sinning from the beginning. He encourages me to follow his path, but it leads to death.

So... if I sin, am I not saved? John said in 1 John 1 that I'm absolutely going to sin. So what is he saying? He's saying that I will make a PRACTICE of doing the works of who I truly follow. As a believer in Christ, I still have the flesh trying to rule my life, so I will stumble into sin... but it doesn't have to take me down. In fact, Proverbs 24:16 says, "For the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity." Sometimes the evidence of my faith in Christ comes AFTER I fall... Do I rise up, or do I stay there? The righteous repent and rise up. The wicked stay on the path of unrighteousness.

Jesus came to deliver me from sin and to destroy the works of the devil. Why? Because He loves me and He knows that sin will destroy me. My choice is to abide with Jesus and let Him destroy the sin in me, or refuse Jesus and let the sin destroy me. Lord, I choose to abide in You, and to repent every time I fall. Praise You for Your mercy!!!

Vs. 9-11 ~ "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother."

As a believer in Christ, I have been born of God. The Holy Spirit dwells in me. The evidence of that is that I will not keep on making a practice of sin. And now I get to where the rubber meets the road. The evidence that I am a child of God and not of the devil is that I pursue righteousness AND love my brothers and sisters in Christ. Andrew Murray says, "Jesus refuses to accept our love until it extends to others." Yikes!

I have to love ALL my brothers and sisters, even the ones who are hard to love? Even the ones who aren't faithfully abiding in Christ, and therefore, not loving me well? As my dad used to say

to me about the commands of God, "The bible doesn't say, "Do this IF ____.' It just says, 'Do this.'" The bible doesn't say, "Love others IF they do x,y,z." It just says, "Love others." And actually, it says, "Love them BECAUSE God loves you."

John goes on to say in vs. 11, "For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." God's message has never changed, because God never changes. His love is a sacrificial, tender, unconditional love. It is absolutely impossible for me to love like that unless I am allowing God's love to abide in me by being absolutely surrendered to Him... His will, His way, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else... with the Holy Spirit pouring His love into my heart and spilling out from my heart into the lives of others... regardless of how they treat me. Absolutely impossible without His help. O Lord, I praise You that You never expect me to do this in my own strength. Your commands are a constant reminder to me that I am utterly helpless without You.

Vs. 12-13 ~ "We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you."

Yikes... How would I be like Cain??? I have never murdered anyone! But John repeats what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount... Hatred is murder. Cain hated, so Cain murdered. James said in James 4:1-2 that we fight and, in essence, murder because of the passions of our own flesh... just like Cain.

Cain hated Abel, not because Abel did anything wrong... but because he did everything right. Hatred and murder are never from the Lord, but from the evil one. I would bet, though, that if someone asked Cain why he hated Abel so much that he was willing to kill him, Cain would not have said, "It's because I have this evil struggle in my heart. I wanted to be appreciated even though my motives were selfish, and I just couldn't handle it." That's what happened, but that's probably not what Cain would have said. He probably would have said something like, "I murdered Abel because he just had to make himself look better than me! He was selfish and rude, and he didn't care that what he did made me look bad." No one who hates considers that the problem is in their own heart. At the point that they do, they are ready to repent.

Vs. 14-15 ~ "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever 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."

This is a sobering statement. Jesus said in John 13:35, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." That's basically what John is saying here, "The evidence of your faith and salvation is that you love. Hatred is the proof that a heart is not with God, but stands against Him." I need to take this seriously. When I have something against someone else, the first thing I need to do is take a look at my own heart. Am I focused on God's kingdom, His rights, and His concerns? Or am I focused on MY kingdom, MY rights, and MY concerns? Am I upset about personal preference or actual sin? If it IS sin, am I

responding in a God honoring manner? O Lord, please help me not to skid past this. Help me to truly love others because You truly love us. I pray I will live my life in such a way that if I were put on trial for loving Jesus, the evidence against me would be overwhelming... starting with how genuinely I love others. I pray that my husband and then the people closest to me would be able to bring the most proof of my love. O Lord, with me, this depth of love is absolutely impossible. But nothing is impossible with You. Please make it so in me. Amen.