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Our aim is to regularly post a new lesson on the first part of each month. So if you wish to follow this course of study, please check regularly each month. If no new lesson appears at the beginning of a particular month, it indicates that we were unable to get it ready in time. In such a case, please check for it after the first of the following month. Your questions or comments are welcomed and will be responded to as much as possible.

PATHWAY OF LIGHT STUDY COURSE

by R. W. Young

“But the path of the just is as a shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day.” (Prov. 4:18)

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of Yahweh; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:13)

LESSON 161, 1 John chapter 3 concluded

1 John 3 began with John speaking of the great love Yahweh has for us in that He has calls us His children. He then points out that when we see Yahshua at His coming again we shall become like Him. That is what the true follower of Yahshua is longing for and expecting. John says that everyone who is looking for that to happen will be working toward that goal by purifying himself at this present time.

Then, in contrast to that, John mentions that whoever sins is being doing lawlessness, for that is what sin is – lawlessness. He then adds that Yahshua came to take way our sin and has no sin in Him. Next, he says that the mark of one who is born of Yahweh is that he is not sinning. In fact, John says, he cannot be sinning – that is living in sin – because he is born of Yahweh and His seed remains in him. Therefore, a person who is living in sin, thereby, shows that he is of the devil and is not of a child of Yahweh. John says, “In this the children of Elohim are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever is not doing righteousness is not of Elohim, neither he that doesn’t love his brother.

VERSES 11-12 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. (12) Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And why did he slay him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

When John says the message we heard from the beginning is that we should love one another, he is most likely referring to the beginning of our coming to know our

Master and His teaching. Yahshua emphasized the second great commandment, which is, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as your own self”. (Lev 19:18; Matt 22:39)

However, Yahshua also added an additional factor when He said, as recorded in John 13:34, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” This was even a greater requirement than that given under the Law of Moses.

Under the law we are told to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. But Yahshua said we are to specifically to “love one another”, that is love our fellow believers. And we are to love them, not just as we love ourselves, but with the same love that He had for us, which is greater than just loving as we love ourselves. It is loving our brothers and sisters in the family of Yah to the extent of being willing to lay down our own lives for them, even as Yahshua laid down His life for us.

How many really have that kind of love for their fellow believers? We might think we would be willing to give our lives for them in the sense of being willing to literally die for them. But the evidence of our having that kind of love, even before a situation should occur in which we could actually die for them, is whether we are laying down our lives for them today. ? Are we willing to give up ourselves to the extent of loving them even if they disagree with our ideas or understanding? Do we love our fellow believers enough to sacrifice ourselves by giving up our own wants, desires, and our material things for them today

The earliest congregation did so. They, “were of one heart, and one soul”. “They had all things in common.” (Acts 4:32) Those that had houses and lands sold them and laid the money at the apostles’ feet so that no one lacked anything. (Acts 4:34,35)

We read in Acts 2:44-45, “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.” They were truly laying down their lives for the good of all the community of believers.

Why were they willing to do this? They did so because they were completely sold out to following the Master, and they had His love in them. They believed His teaching that we should love each other just as He loved us. They believed His teaching that they had to “deny” themselves to be His followers. (Luke 9:23)

They were truly born again unto love of the brethren as Peter mentions in 1 Peter 1:22-23, which says, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Having been born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of Elohim, which lives and abides for ever.*” We are born again unto a love of the brethren.

Why is it that believers often cannot get along with each other? It is due to a lack of the kind of love Yahshua commanded us to have. Why are those who have this world's goods often unwilling to part from them in order to help not only their neighbor, but their fellow believers? Same reason, of course.

The communal spirit and principle that operated in the early congregation should still be operating in the present day congregation. Paul also made this very clear. He wrote in 2 Corinthians 8:14-15, "But by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may be a supply* for their want, that their abundance also may be *a supply* for your want: that there may be equality: As it is written, He that *had gathered* much had nothing over; and he that *had gathered* little had no lack." This is the communal spirit that should be in each of us.

John points us to an example of the opposite of love, an example that goes back to the very beginning of time, when he mentions Cain who killed his brother. He tells us that the reason he did this is because his [Cain's] deeds were evil and his brother Abel's deeds were righteous.

We know the story from Genesis chapter 4. Cain's offering was rejected of Yahweh, because he was not doing "well". (Gen 4:7) As John puts it, he was not doing righteousness, so his offering was not "accepted". John continues to expand on this matter the lack love, which he calls "hate". To not love our brother John considers to be the same as to hate him.

VERSES 13-15 Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. (14) We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death. (15) Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

This refers back to the previous verse about Cain not loving, but hating his brother, because Cain's deeds were evil and his brother's were righteous. That is why the world does not love, but hates, the true followers of Messiah. Their deeds are evil and the believer's refusal to participate in their kind of life, but living an opposite kind of life, a life of righteousness, shines light on the wrong way they live. Therefore, they hate the believer.

Yahshua said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. (19) If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 15:18-19) Also Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:12, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Messiah Yahshua shall suffer persecution." If you are truly living according to the word of Yahweh, you just will not fit in with the world. They may put up with you, and even show respect to you, but in their heart of hearts they will hate you.

Because of the influence of “Christian” teaching in the past in this nation, and because of our laws, we do not experience the persecution that believers do in many other nations. However, that may change down the line. In fact, when the beast power of the Anti-messiah comes into operation, it will indeed change.

John continues to point to “love of the brethren” as a primary proof that we have “passed from death unto life”. He says that the one who does not have such love remains in death. He says that not loving your brother, which he calls hate, is to be a murderer, and points out that “no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

I remember when I was in my teens riding on a bus with some other high school students when a girl who went to the same Baptist church I went to said, “I hate [*whoever it was*]”. I said, something like this: “Then you are a murderer according to the Bible”. You can imagine how “that went over like a lead balloon”.

VERSES 16-18 Hereby perceive we the love of *Messiah*, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. (17) But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of *compassion* from him, how dwelleth the love of Elohim in him? (18) My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

As said before, loving as Yahshua loved means being willing to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. John says if we see our brother in need and have this world’s goods (or money) whereby we can meet that need, but don’t do so, then, we do not have Yahweh’s love in us. That is the bottom line. It is “where the rubber meets the road”.

It is easy to say we love the brethren. But the real test is what we do when a need arises among them and we have the means to meet that need.

How many professed believers are there (who are well able to afford to) would be willing to buy something costly for another believer that that other believer badly needs (like a car as a possible example)? I know a sister who because of terrible sickness had her car up for repossession. Yet she either didn’t know believers who had the money to make the back payments, or those who did have it choose not to depart with their money. I don’t know which was the case. But if there were any fellow believers who knew of her need and had the means to help her, yet chose not to do so, such will have to answer to Yahweh for it in the Day of Reckoning. (Incidentally, that need did become met through the collective help from a number of sources that became solicited on her behalf.)

Loving “not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth”, as John says, reminds me of what Yahshua said. As is recorded in Luke 3:11, “He ... said unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath food, let him do likewise.”

I am reminded of a somewhat humorous story that really illustrates the difference between loving just in word and loving in actual deed.. It goes something like this: These two old boys from the backwoods were talking together when one said to the other, “Hey Joe if you had two houses, would you give me one? Sure, said Moe, I’d give you one house if I had two. Joe, if you had two million dollars, would you give me one million? Sure, Moe, if I had two million dollars, I’d give you one million. Joe, if you had two chickens, would you give me one? Oh come on now Moe, you know I have two chickens.”

VERSES 19-24 And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. (20) For if our heart condemn us, Elohim is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. (21) Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward Elohim. (22) And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. (23) And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Yahshua Messiah, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. (24) And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

What John is saying is that these things he is writing are what show us that we are of the truth, if we are doing them. On the other hand, if our heart, that is to say, our conscience, condemns us, Yahweh is greater than our own heart or conscience and knows all things. He knows those sins, and shortcomings, that our own hearts are not even aware of. So, if our heart condemns us, then, Yahweh’s condemnation is even greater.

In other words, if we realize in our own hearts that we are not living right, then, we are not accepted by Yahweh. Those who think Yahweh accepts them through the blood of Yahshua, just because they profess to believe the gospel, when they are knowingly condemned of sin by their own hearts or consciences are deceived. They need to know that Yahweh is not complicit with sin by accepting them because they declare faith without them having true repentance that turns away from sin.

On the other hand, if our heart does not condemn us, for we are not knowingly living with sin in our lives, then, “we have confidence toward Yahweh.” This is walking in the light. While we are doing so, and living with a clear conscience, then, even though we are not yet perfect in the absolute sense of perfect (that is, with perfect knowledge) we are still “accepted in the Beloved”. (Eph 1:6) We are accepted as righteous by Yahweh, because the blood of the Lamb cleanses us from all sin.

Then, when we have this kind of confidence, that Yahweh does not condemn us, John says we can also have confidence that He hears and answers our prayers. We know that He will answer them, because (even though we are not perfect yet in the absolute sense of having perfect knowledge and living up to that) we are keeping His commandments and are doing those things pleasing in His sight.

Of course Yahweh's commandments would certainly include the Ten Commandments. Those who know Yahweh will be keeping these to the best of their knowledge. It is sad that many devout people who believe in the Savior have been taught against the 4th (Sabbath) commandment. These same people have, for the most part, also been misled concerning the importance of using Yahweh's name, which is mentioned the 3rd commandment tells us we are not to take in vain, or bring to naught.

That the Ten Commandments are forever can be seen by the fact that when the temple in heaven is opened we see the Ark of the Covenant – that box that contains the Ten Commandments. (Rev 11:19) As best I remember the quotation, John (or Charles) Wesley said, "You cannot change the Ten Commandments, unless you change creation." They are all based on the way Yahweh made things to be. So those who say the Ten Commandments are done away with are in tremendous deception.

But here in this scripture the apostle John sums up what he is directly referring to by keeping his commandments in verse 23. He says, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Yahshua Messiah, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." He even makes these two to be one by saying, "And this is His commandment", rather than, "And these are His commandments".

If we truly believe on the name of Yahshua – believe in Yahweh's Son – we will love one another. We will do so, because we will be born of Him and have Him living in us. And, if we will love one another it is also because we believe in Him who said to do so.

John concludes his teaching here by saying, "And he that keeps his commandments dwells in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." The word translated "dwells", in "dwells in Him", and the word translated "abides", in "abides in us", are the same word in the Greek.

So two things are mentioned here as evidence that we "dwell" in Him and He dwells in us. If we keep His commandments it shows that we "dwell" (remain or abide) in Him. Also the presence of the Holy Spirit is the evidence that He "dwells" (remains or abides) in us.

This last statement is similar to what Paul write in Romans 8:15-16, which says, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father'. The Spirit itself is bearing witness with our spirit, that we are the children of Elohim." The cry from the heart that calls Yahweh "Abba" (which means, "father") is a witness of our having the Spirit within. Also, we could not (from the heart) call out "Lord Yahshua" (or "Adonai Yahshua") except by the Holy Spirit according to 1 Cor. 12:3. So such a heart felt cry is witness of having the Holy Spirit.

John mentioning that “we know He dwells in us by the Spirit which He has given us” leads him to next talk about the importance of trying or testing the spirits. That will be the subject that begins the next chapter, chapter 4, which we will look at in the next lesson..