

The Undeniable Mark of Authenticity

1 John #3

1 John 2:7-14

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. For as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. For no greater love has any man than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. And you are my friends if you do what I command.

The most popular Rolex on the planet is a Rolex Submariner. For a cool 10 grand, this Rolex Submariner wristwatch can be yours. But if, by chance, you traveled to New York City and a street vendor tried to sell you a Rolex Submariner for \$59.99, you wouldn't buy it. The watch might say "Rolex." The box might say "Rolex." But for \$59.99, you know by intuition the watch before your eyes is no Rolex Submariner. Real Rolex Submariners come with an undeniable mark of authenticity: they come with a certificate from the manufacturer. The most popular purse on the planet is a Louis Vuitton Neverfull MM Beige Monogram. For a cool 2 grand, you can make your wife happy on your anniversary. But if, by chance, you traveled to Looneyville, Texas and saw a Louis Vuitton Neverfull MM Beige Monogram at the Looneyville, TX Flea Market for \$25, you would be wise not to buy it. You might contemplate it. But don't be fooled. It will take her all of about 2 seconds to realize it's no Louis Vuitton Neverfull MM Beige Monogram. For the Louis Vuitton Neverfull MM Beige Monogram comes with an undeniable mark of authenticity: it comes with a certificate from the manufacturer.

Dear friends, there is one undeniable mark of authenticity for Christians in the New Testament. There is one and only one. And it comes with a certificate from our Provident and Divine Manufacturer. That undeniable mark of authenticity is love. When we demonstrate it to others, love becomes the certificate that tells others who we are, who we were manufactured by, and whose kingdom we belong to. "These things I have written that you may know you have eternal life," John writes over and over again in 1 John in various forms. What you believe about Jesus will either assure you that you belong to God or cause you to wonder if you are on the outside looking in. We saw that last week. Love, however, demonstrates that we've gotten our belief about Jesus right. We love because he first loved us. John tells us all about it in 1 John 2:7-11. Love has an origin. It has a method of operation. It has an opposite. And it has an outgrowth. Turn there with me.

⁷ Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. ⁸ Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. ⁹ Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. ¹⁰ Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. ¹¹ But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them. ¹² I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. ¹³ I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. ¹⁴ I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

1. Love's Origin (7)

- **OVIASC Meeting:** (1) Several years ago, I walked into a hotel lobby right here in Vero Beach and saw a sign that read "OVIASC Committee Meeting has been moved to the 2nd floor assembly room." (2) I did a double take to make sure I read it right because I've never heard of a OVIASC Committee. So, I asked the front desk clerk about it. She said "that's a great question, I'm glad you asked. The OVIASC is short for the Old Vero Ice Age Sites Committee." To which I responded: "if you say so." It turns out she was right. I did some digging (pun intended) and found out a fella archaeologists call the Vero Man decide to settle here long before anyone with the last name Gifford or Sexton. He dates from the Pleistocene Geological Period. That was a long time ago. (3) Old Vero Man has been with us since the beginning.
- **In the Beginning:** (1) There is a phrase in the Bible that gives us the very foundation determining what is true in a world full of people who, as in John's Day, are deceived by falsehood and enjoy living deceived: "in the beginning." (2) It's the first phrase of the Bible: "in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." It's the first phrase of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." (3) In the beginning of God's covenant with Israel for the generation who would enter the Promised Land, every devout Jew would repeat Deut. 6:4-5 twice each day: "Listen, Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. Love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." In Leviticus 19:18, God also instructed his people to "love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord." That's why Jesus – One who was from the beginning – combined both verses when answering the scribes question about the greatest commandment. (4) In v7, John tells his audience – which was all Christians (though they were primarily Jewish in that time) – that the command to love was as old as time, creation, and covenant itself. And this command is foundational to what it means to know God. (5) And the reason he told them that was because nothing good ever comes from forgetting and departing from first principles.
- **App:** For we never graduate from commands to love God and love neighbor. They were commands from the beginning.

2. Love's Operation (8)

- **Gifts:** (1) There is a great lesson about the difference between how the Old and New Covenants operate by observing how gift giving should work. (2) Suppose it's your anniversary and you buy your spouse flowers with a card inside that says: "I didn't really want to buy these because they cost a lot of money. But since it's our anniversary, I realize it's what I'm supposed to do. I love you, dear." How do you think your spouse is going to

respond, regardless of the expense? (3) We cannot be coerced into loving someone just because that's what we are supposed to do. It has to emanate from who we are. That's true every time you give a gift to someone, regardless of the setting.

- **Love is Not One of Many Marks of Authenticity. It is the Mark of Authenticity.** (1) John says something in v8 that is one of the most important lessons in the whole Bible: "Yet, I am writing you a new command, it's truth is seen in him and in you." He just said the v7 that it was an old command. Now he says it's a new one. What in the world does he mean? (2) From the beginning, all those who followed God had an obligation to do it. We just talked about it in the previous point. But Jesus took the commands to love God and neighbor to a whole new level. (3) Here's how: Jesus knew that one cannot be coerced into loving someone else by a simple command to do it. Love has to emanate from who we are and who Christ made us to be. In essence, Jesus command to "love as I have loved you is more of a commandment to be than to do. (4) That's why the new covenant is greater than the old. It's not a covenant, like the old, that says "I know you said we have to love our neighbor so I will." It's being that love without even thinking about it just as Jesus did. (5) And the only way we can measure up to that higher standard is by allowing Christ to make us to be that rather than something we think of as just an obligation.
- **App:** Jesus is more concerned with what we are than what we do because what we are always determines what we do.

3. Love's Opposite (9-11)

- **We Live in a World of Opposites:** (1) The opposite of weak is strong. The opposite of push is pull. The opposite of hotdog is colddog. The opposite of a Mango is a Womango. The opposite of cheers is chores. And the opposite of love is hate.
- **When We Think of Hate:** We think of someone or a group of people making our blood boil to the point that it produces in us every unwholesome thought known to mankind. For some of us, we live with that for a while until we recognize that harboring that kind of animosity hurts us much more than the target. Others live with it and make it the dinner guest of our hearts who never leaves nor wears out his welcome.
- **That Is, Indeed, Hate. But John Adds a Dimension to It We Are Often Oblivious To:** (1) in verse 8, he says "anyone who claims to be in the light yet hates his brother is in darkness." (2) It's not the outburst of anger that reveals hatred that John has in mind. Instead, it's the reality of living with something we know deep down in our hearts is wrong. But instead of not casting out that demon. We learn to live with it. Because it's something we've grown with. (3) We've grown comfortable living with hatred to the point that we don't even recognize it. That's what he means. And it is quite an alarming thought. How many times do we hear people who go to church every Sunday, but apparent in their personalities and spirit is a critical, harsh spirit about everything and, seemingly, everyone. They know it's wrong. But they learn to live with it, their conscience becomes seared to it, and they no longer even recognize it. And others who know them say, "Oh, that's just so and so." That, to John, is the worst kind of hate. That's why John says they are "in darkness." In other words, they don't know Jesus as their Savior regardless of if they say they do.
- **So, What's the Opposite of the Kind of Hate That John Describes?** (1) It's love that is proactive, not reactive. We don't love because others love. We love because God demonstrates his love for us in this way: while we were sinners Christ died for us.
- **App:** Hate requires no initiative. Love, on the other hand, requires every initiative and takes them. They are as different as cheers and chores.

4. Love's Outgrowth

- **Pygmy Date Palm:** (1) If you buy a Pygmy Date Palm that's been sitting in the Garden Section of Lowes for a while, you'll notice the roots have gone as far as they can in the plastic pot. (2) But within a week or two of putting it in the ground, it starts to actually look like a Pygmy, not a Dwarf. Why? Because as the roots go into the ground, the Pygmy grows upwards. Outgrowth is the natural response.
- **When Love Takes Root, It Grows, Though at Varying Degrees** (1) In v12-14, John employs a figure of speech into his writing where a word for one thing stands for something else. It's called a metonymy. (2) We see this with the words "dear children," "young men," and "fathers." He's talking to New Christians/babes in the faith (dear children); those who have matured in their faith past the point of being a babe in the faith (young men); and those who have walked with the Lord in a way that demonstrates wisdom and influences others to grow (Fathers). These are not age related either. They are spiritual maturity appropriate. (3) They all connected by the phrase "I write to you." All three levels of maturity are here today irrespective of age. But what makes them great is this: John designs them to assure everyone where they are. And the way we know where we are in the faith is to examine them and see which sparks in you something you wrestle with in your relationship with God and need assurance in that area from Him.
- **The Varying Degrees of Maturity:** (1) New Christians/babes in the faith (Dear Children): Your sins are forgiven (v12a) and you know the Father (14a). Jesus doesn't want you to live with doubting your faith. He wants you to know that love has taken root because you know the Father and he knows you. Take him at His Word. (2) Those who have matured past the point of being a babe in the faith: (13b) You have overcome the evil one; you are strong; the Word lives in you (13b and 14c). You've learned the difference between a temptation from our accuser and adversary and a test from God. You've figured out that God isn't adversarial, nor is he an accuser. When he deals with you, it's not from a perspective of guilt. It's to test and grow you. You've learned to spot the difference by your familiarity with the Word of God and it has become a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your faith. That's why you are strong. (3) Those who walk with the Lord in a way that demonstrates wisdom and causes others to grow: You know him who is from the beginning (v13a; v14b). You are able not only discerning about people; you are also discerning about what people claim. You can sift through what people say about Jesus, etc. and know, unlike the Gnostics who claimed they had "special knowledge," what is dangerous and what is beneficial. That's because you know Him who is from the beginning.
- **App:** And all these levels of growth in the Christian life come from an understanding of love that is proactive, not reactive. It comes from an understanding that who we are determines what we do. It comes from knowing that Jesus took the initiative by loving you right where you were in your life. And as long as there is breath in your lungs, you are going to take the initiative to do the same.