

Light, Life, and Love - Part 3

by Roy Hession

The sermon emphasizes the importance of new birth, righteousness, and purification, highlighting the incompatibility of sin and the life of God.

Duration: 48:23

Topics: "Love"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses two sections of a passage from the Bible. The first section emphasizes the need for confession and acknowledging one's own shortcomings and inability to love. The speaker emphasizes that trying to be better or more loving is not the way to be born again, but rather confessing one's hopelessness and relying on the grace of God and the blood of Jesus. The second section focuses on the examples of Sodom and Gomorrah, highlighting the sin of homosexuality and the consequences they faced. The speaker also mentions the importance of removing the old self-centered nature and embracing the new nature centered on God.

Transcript

We'll turn once again to the first epistle of John, and we will begin at chapter 2, verse 28, and read through chapter 3. Chapter 2, verse 28. And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.

But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope set on him, every man that hath this hope set on Jesus, with this glorious prospect of one day being transformed into the likeness of his holiness, purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever commiteth sin is guilty also of lawlessness.

So reads the revised and all the other versions, deeper than transgression of the law. Whosoever commiteth sin is guilty also of lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins.

And in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

Little children, let no man deceive you. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that commiteth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning.

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him. And he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother, and wherefore slew he him, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.

He that loveth not, and the revised drops out the word his brother, he that loveth not, just doesn't love. An unloving man abideth or remaineth in death. There's not the evidence of new birth in him.

Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, in effect. And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God.

And here too you will see the words of God are in italics, and the revised rightly doesn't translate them. Hereby we see love. This is love, in its essence, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. I think we'll stop there. I've been very much impressed this morning that if one was not going through consistently and consecutively the word of God, there are subjects here that I, for one, might not speak upon in years.

If we, as we normally do, turn to those scriptures that seem to become specially living to us, I don't know that this very much would be very much spoken of. Indeed, I can't, or seldom, recollect of hearing the themes in this chapter ever spoken upon as an isolated message. And therein is the tremendous importance of reading the word consecutively.

And we who preach are preaching through it consecutively. It's the only way to be sure that we shall have the balance of scripture in our experience and in our thinking. Otherwise there are some passages which we conveniently skip.

We either don't quite know what they mean, and we don't puzzle over them to see what they mean, or, not appealing to us, they never get thought about or spoken about or applied to our lives. And certainly there are passages in today's portion which are of that order. Now, the passage we've read today falls into two sections, I suggest.

I really feel that the theme begins in the last two verses of chapter 3. Possibly the chapter heading could have been there. And it goes from verse 28 of chapter 2, first of all, down to verse 10. And then there's a second passage section from verse 11 onwards.

Now, dealing with this first section, John puts to a tremendous truth. He puts it negatively and then positively. Here you have it, I'm sorry, it's positively first and then negatively.

Here you have the positive statement of a truth he wants us to consider. Verse 29 of chapter 2, If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. The mark that a man is born of God, and that's a characteristic phrase of John's, born of God, the God of God.

His whole thought and teaching is always based on the new birth. This is not teaching for unregenerate men. This isn't a standard of life for them, save as it convicts them of their need of new birth.

This is for those who've had this extraordinary, heavenly experience of new birth and have had life from above planted in them from heaven. And may I say what a wonderful thing new birth is? It's different from merely deciding or merely believing. Sometimes I feel it's different from conversion.

And the way in which we speak of conversion, we mean them as synonymous, but I've known some people who say they've been converted and then later they get born of God. And it's a wonderful thing when you see it happen before your eyes. You've seen it, some of you who've led souls to Christ.

Not just got them to make a decision, but you come away from such an interview humbled and amazed. You've seen the new birth actually take place. You've been like a midwife, you've actually seen it.

And sometimes I've found instead of me telling them, the newly born one, as he's coming to life, tells me what he's seeing. And you're amazed. Well, all that is assumed.

It's a wonderful thing. My friend, if you haven't had something altogether from heaven done in your heart that owes little or nothing to natural environment or natural influences or even the effect of a church upon you, you may well doubt whether you're a Christian at all. The children of God are not born of blood.

That is because their blood relations are Christian. They're not born of the will of the flesh, making up their own mind to do me better. And they're not born of the will of man, the minister coming down and saying, isn't it time you were confirmed or baptised? No.

No. It's utterly and completely independent of that. The wind blows where it listed.

You can't tell where it begins and you can't tell where it's going to end either. Who can tell where it's all going to end when this man and that man gets born from heaven? I think we who are Christian workers ought to not be satisfied with anything less than that. Oh, they'll decide and they'll do this and the other and well, maybe it's all right.

But we're waiting for something else. That's what we're looking for. They can even be teachers, Sunday school teachers, but we're looking for something else.

This is what John assumes to be happening. And he says, one of the signs that a man is so born of God is that he does righteousness and therefore everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him. That's the truth stated positively.

He then states the same truth negatively in verse 8. He that committeth sin on the other hand is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. Two fatherhoods, the fatherhood of God and the fatherhood of the devil. And elsewhere in this very passage he says in this manifest the children of God and the children of the devil.

You're either one or the other. You haven't got to be very wicked to be a child of the devil, just to be in the state of nature. And not to have had new birth is to be a child of the devil, so says scripture.

But there is the truth, negative, positively, negatively. Everyone that doeth righteousness is born of God. But he on the other hand who commits sin isn't born of God, he's of the devil.

You have the same thing, the negative and the positive, in one verse. Chapter 3, verse 6. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. And negatively, whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, nor even known him.

And then to cap it all you've got, verse 9. Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin. For his seed, God's seed, God's nature remains in him. And he cannot sin because he is born of God.

Now that's what John says. And you can understand when I say that naturally you might hear your minister, who may be a faithful Bible teacher, teach for a few years, but he never really touched those passages. And I think I'd be the same.

And that's the value for we who preach, going, having series, and we're compelled to take the next subject. Well now, quite obviously, challenging and in a sense right as this may sound, it presents to us certain difficulties. First of all, the plain simple fact is that we who are quite sure we're born of God do know that sometimes we do sin.

Well then are we mistaken in thinking ourselves born of God at all? Because we do find we sin. Secondly, we also find that those who are not born of God sometimes appear to commit righteousness. And they sometimes would appear to put us, who know the Lord, to shame by their sacrificial service in a home, maybe, and their sweetness.

And we feel so bad to think that we're Christians and we can be put to shame. Sometimes. Let's not get the idea that you can so emphasize this that every unregenerate man is such a sweet person.

They're not. This world's a wicked world. And selfishness infects everybody, but it would seem sometimes you meet somebody without new birth so good, a Nicodemus for instance.

Well, how are you going to say because he does righteousness? He is born of God. And then a third difficulty is that these statements as they appear at first, as you look at them, would appear to almost contradict other of John's statements in this very epistle. Because he's talking to believers and he says, if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.

And again, if we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar. And again, in this very passage, he talks about those who have this hope of the coming of the Lord and their ultimate likeness to Christ set on him, they purify themselves. Well, if you're clean already, there's no need to go on purifying.

If you're purifying yourself, there's something from which we need to be purified. So, there's no doubt at all that this is a passage. I wouldn't say a difficult passage.

In a sense, there's no passage which is difficult really in the word of God. God doesn't give us something difficult. But you've got to ask yourself a few questions.

You've got to go a little deeper into it. And may I say, with regard to what we call difficult passages, beware of an explanation that explains them away. They're not there to be explained away.

They're there with something positive about them. I admit there are some scriptures which, well, all we can do is say, well, I don't quite understand it, but it can't mean this, because otherwise we'd contradict a whole realm of other very positive statements. Well, if that's as far as we can get with some passages, that's it.

But really and truly, with every such passage, there's a very real message, a positive one, in it. Now, I believe to understand what John is wanting to tell to us, we've got just to recollect a little bit of what is the obvious background of the people to whom he's writing. As we said yesterday, the danger of that early church was false profession.

It was in the Pentecostal period. Days of great excitement. Days of healings.

Days of prophetic utterance. And those are always days that have a particular danger. I mean, the church has had days like that, and I'm not sure if we're not moving a little bit into another such period in the church's history.

And in a sense, it's wonderful to see things livening up and people finding God real, more real than they did before. But it has dangers, as it did here. And the danger is that people get so concerned with emotional experiences and excitement that they forget the basic moral issues.

Now, that isn't something peculiar today. It's always been so. The danger of the early church.

And if you want to see the state of the church to which John was writing, you've got to turn to Jude, who was John's contemporary. And there are parallel passages which we needn't turn to in the second epistle of Peter. Take verse four of Jude.

Jude, you know, comes just before Revelation. He says, there are certain men crept in. Into what? Into the church, into the fellowship, appearing to believers.

There are certain men crept in, unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation. Ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. Now, a man who doesn't go to church, a man who doesn't profess to believe, cannot turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.

He doesn't know anything about the grace of God. He hasn't touched with the grace of God. It's only a professed believer who can say, it's all right boys, it's all grace, we can do as we like.

We needn't respect the old moral standards, it's all grace. And he can use the doctrine of the grace of God to indulge in lasciviousness. And lasciviousness means moral impurity.

Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. If not denying his position in words, in effect, in deed. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.

Here were a people who come out of Egypt, but because they went astray, they were destroyed. In other words, he's saying you may appear to be amongst those who have come out of Egypt. But God isn't going to tolerate sin.

And he also talks about even the angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, under the judgment of the last year. Then he goes on to talk about Sodom and Gomorrah, with their terrible sin of sodomy, homosexuality. What a flaming example God made of homosexuality.

In the utter overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, which is here, they gave themselves up, going over to fornication and going after strange flesh. That's homosexuality, and perhaps even more perverse things than even that. And they were made an example of eternal vengeance.

Likewise, also these in your church, filthy dreamers, defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Even Paul talks about those silly women laden with sins, about those who creep in and lead them astray. It's all, this was in the church, in this excitable church, full of miracles and things happening.

There was this danger of a false profession. And it wasn't only that a man was failing to live the victorious life, but they got together and they'd almost got out of doctrine. It was rationalized.

And so you see why John wrote like that. And it's a danger today with every one of us. We may turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.

This is all right, I can always repent. And we go from one thing to another. And the decay of conscience, the degree of it is quite astonishing.

I know it in my own heart. And sometimes one has to counsel others. One is amazed how a person can be doing this, this, and this, and yet not only going to church, but even singing in a choir, or praying, or even teaching.

This is an extraordinary thing with us. And maybe if you haven't been involved in such a situation personally, we may be shocked. And yet I suppose one thing leads to another.

The small things get rationalized and the bigger things rationalize. And ultimately we come to terms with sin. And we live happily with it.

And it doesn't seem to penetrate that the two are utterly inconsistent and incompatible, that we cannot serve Christ and Barabbas. Well, none of us can point to anybody else because at one degree or another we've all done it. We've tolerated sin, at the same time gone on appearing to be Christians, even participating in Christian service.

Now, it's to that danger and that condition that John speaks. And I believe that what he's concerned to show is, as I've just said, the utter incompatibility of sin, knowingly indulged in and tolerated, with the life of God in the soul of man. And he says, frankly, I can't conceive that a man can have the life of God if he tolerates sin and rationalizes sin and practices it.

And he gives us various cogent arguments along that line. The first one, he starts this lovely sentence, 3 verse 1. But mind you, I don't think the chapter heading should be there. It follows on.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us. We shall be called the Son of God. I don't think at the moment he's really sort of having a little rejoice.

He's starting there. You'll see where he's getting to. Then he says, we don't know what we are now.

We know we're sons of God now, but who knows what wonderful destiny is ahead of us when we see him, we shall be like him. Every man that hath this hope set on Jesus, he's going to be an ultimate likeness to the spotless Son of God. He's a man who purifies himself.

If the thought and consciousness of the coming of the Lord is near to us, if we are conscious of the fact that God's purpose for us is to be like Jesus, so he's the firstborn among many brethren, it's bound to have a purifying effect on us. Now, perhaps that is rather a weak word, a purifying effect, not without us doing something. Oh no, it isn't merely a purifying effect.

Every man that hath this hope set on him, he purifies himself. In other words, he does what Nerman did, and what we heard about last night. He goes and washes.

When such a man is conscious of leprosy, he doesn't tolerate it. He goes and washes. He's one with a high destiny, and this doesn't go with that.

To purify yourself means to wash your robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. As the message was going out last night, it came to me afresh. I thought, it isn't go and be washed, go and wash, it's something you've got to do.

It's repentance, but at the foot of the cross, where there's cleansing. And the man who has this hope on him, he purifies himself. And so John begins with that.

He's out to show the utter incompatibility of sin in the life of the believer, while his very hope is designed to cause him to judge the first beginnings of it in his life, and go and wash at Calvary. And then he goes on to say, in the next verse, verse four, Whosoever committeth sin, committeth lawlessness. Don't you know what sin is? It isn't just something unethical.

Sin is lawlessness. You know there's a difference between crime and anarchy. Crime is a transgression of the law.

Anarchy is the refusal of the right of the state to make laws at all. And sin, says John, isn't merely crime, the breaking of God's laws. It's the refusal of the right of God to make laws at all.

Why can't I do what I like? And when I sin, knowingly, that's what I'm doing. My goodness, can that exist in the life of a man who's had this miracle of new birth and knows the Lord Jesus? And then he says he's utterly inconsistent with the very purpose for which Jesus came. Next verse, And ye know that he was manifested for one thing, to take away sins.

How can a Christian sort of come to terms with some sin in his life and yet profess to follow the Lord when the whole purpose of the coming of the Lord was to take away that thing? And then he goes on to say with a further argument, Don't you know who the author of sin is? He's the devil. And the man who commits sin is of the devil. That's it.

He that committeth sin is of the devil. For the devil sinneth from the beginning. That thing, friend, is of the devil.

It's of the devil. But you say, I am of God. They don't go together.

And if you persist in that thing, everybody's got a perfect right to regard you as of the devil and you may well doubt whether you're of God at all. That's the argument. This is solemn for everyone, for me, for everybody.

And then he says the whole nature of the new birth is to exclude sin. Verse 9, Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin. And the reason is this, For God's seed remaineth in him.

Have you heard of the little girl who came back from Sunday school and the text she had got to learn was, The peace of God shall keep your hearts. And she got it wrong and she told her mother that the text was, A peace of God was to keep our hearts. Well, she wasn't quite so far wrong.

We are partakers when we are born anew of the divine nature. There is a peace of God. In other words, that's the encouraging thing, in other words, all that God wants out of you, he has in effect put into you.

He's not asking blood out of a stone. He's given you a heart of flesh. He's given you a part of his own nature.

To walk in righteousness and to walk loving your brother is not something utterly alien, not to the man who's born of God. He's got God's seed within him. And that seed can't conceivably sin.

John at the moment doesn't mention the fact that the other seed is still there because that's not in view. He's just emphasising the other thing. Oh, there is another.

The old has not been removed, the old nature, the self-centred nature. But oh, thank God, a new one has been put in which is as much akin to heaven as the other is akin to hell. The one which is naturally centred on God as the other is naturally centred on self.

Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast-wind it in either direction. And so he's concerned to show that in the nature of the case, sin can have no part in the life of the born-again child of God.

It's an absolute contradiction of the whole thing. And he would have us say, if you must have sin, then you'd better give up your feeble, futile profession. It's got to be Jesus or Barabbas.

You can't have both. Well, you see, but that's true. I can see that is so in the nature of the case.

But what about me? Well, we know ourselves, those of us who desire most ardently to serve the Lord, that there's another law in our members which wars against the law of our mind and brings us sometimes into captivity to the law of sin which is in our members so that in distress we cry out, O wretched man that I am. The important thing is that we do cry out, O wretched man that I am, which shows that sin to us is not tolerated. We don't regard it as an essential part.

We do regard it as an absolute contradiction. We do regard it as something that should have no part at all and which needs the drastic remedy of the blood of Jesus Christ. I turned up a little book this morning.

It just gave me two lovely illustrations, you see. The natural thing for the compass is to point to the north, though it may, because of other things, be deflected. If you put a piece of metal that's magnetic, it will deflect it somewhat.

But take it away and its natural thing is to point north. And then another illustration, the natural thing for smoke is to rise up, though a downdraft may turn it away from time to time. Its natural thing is that.

And the natural thing, isn't it wonderful to be able to say, the natural thing, or if you like the supernatural thing for the child of God, is to be centred on Christ. Yes, we do get deflected. But in the born-again child of God, sin is an accident for which he's guilty.

Yes, he doesn't deny that. But it's not habitual. His real centre is God, is Christ.

This is, if what Johnny says is true, we must state it. The natural thing for the life of the child of God is to go up, though sometimes there are some downdrafts. The only thing is that we are responsible, our own foolishness and folly and wandering wills, for those downdrafts.

The natural thing is that. Someone has said, to fall into sin is the experience of a man. To boast in sin is the experience of a devil.

To grieve over sin is the experience of a saint. It would seem to me that John puts two alternatives, to be committing sin or to be confessing sin. If you're confessing sin, you're not committing it.

You aren't committing the thing you're truly confessing. And what makes a man confess? What makes a man hate the garment spotted with the flesh? Why, the fact there's another seed within it. But if, dear friends, we've come to terms with certain sins, if we've allowed them to become a part of our lives, and we don't regard them as an utter contradiction to the whole life of God and flee to Calvary with the first beginnings of them, then we may well doubt whether we're born of God at all.

And a little healthy doubt about that would be good for us when we're living in sin. Let's get it clear. Masturbation has no part in the life of the believer.

It's an utter contradiction of the life of God himself. Improper petting has no habitual part, no part at all in the soul, the life of a man who has been born of God. Fornication, no part at all.

He's to flee from it and from every incitement to it, every temptation to it. And if improper kissing and petting leads to it, you flee that. But how easy it is when one isn't speaking without knowledge.

We've known as we've helped souls, and we know from the deceiver's own heart that you can get to a place where this thing can go on, and it's rationalized. I've been amazed at the arguments that such have used to quieten conscience. That's what happened in this early church.

Dishonesty is to have no part, no part at all. And if we've come to terms with some dishonest thing, stealing, we may well doubt whether the thing has happened which has magnetized our needle so that it naturally points to the cross and to God. Jealousy.

Have you come to live with jealousy? Accept jealousy as a part, and perhaps don't see it be utterly, utterly inconsistent of the one who gave up everything for us? We're not willing to be second, we must be first. The man who's born of God does not commit, means practice. If it comes, the proof that he's a saint indeed is he grieves over it.

He may have difficulty sometimes in repenting of it. I know sometimes you repent and it comes back again, but he doesn't indulge. You find him there battling through until at last Jesus has given him the victory.

And he can go to that other brother and say, Brother, I'm sorry. If he can't get the victory, sometimes the devil keeps bringing back the thing you repent of. He says, Reverend, pray for me, I'm in a bad way.

All those are the blessed exercises that show you the seed of God is remaining. He does not commit sin, yet he's not content to tolerate it. And in any case, there's a seed within him that's actually alien to it.

And he didn't despair that he'll never come to, of course he will, with the seed of God in him. And I repented of my sins, and somehow, you don't know how it is, somehow, one way or another, Jesus comes and gives you the victory. But the fact that you go to the cross at all is proof.

To habitually live with a resentment, to regard it as part of our Christian lives, is sin indeed, and is no evidence of new birth. Well, now, this is the sort of thing that perhaps you wouldn't naturally speak about or think about, did it not, can come in the word of God, and you find yourself having to address yourself to this challenge. And so he ends up with that section, verse 10.

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Isn't that terrific? Children of God, and children of the devil. And I don't think it would be a bad thing if someone said, well, please, I know what I am.

On the basis of that, I am a child of the devil. Very good to put yourself where you belong, because, dear one, if you really acknowledge that that is the case, there's God's blessed way of changing from one fabric to the other. But you see, I did profess, I gave my heart to the Lord.

Let's not worry too much about way back there. If I've come to terms with sin, and if for long I've been practising it, then I need, I didn't worry whether my childhood profession was right or wrong, I've got to get right with God now. And we read, To as many as received him, this Christ of God, to them gave he the right to become the children of God, who are born, not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but holy and completely of God.

Again I say, I repeat what was said, to fall into sin is the experience of a man. To boast in sin is the experience of the devil. To grieve over sin and hurry to Jesus with it, knowing there's mercy and grace with the Lord, is the work of a saint.

Which is so helpful. It means that any of us can get into that third class, if we've never been there before. And if we are there, and want to continue to give evidence, we can continue to go to Calvary.

And the positive then comes. Well, there is that first section, with no time really to more than touch on the second. He says then in verse 11, verse 10 rather, finishing that section, In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil, whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God, and then he adds, neither he that loveth not his brother.

Righteousness, and righteousness is costly, there's always a cross in it, you've got to be willing to lose sometimes, to do the right thing, and love are the marks of new birth. And as you go through this epistle, you will find that love includes righteousness, because as we saw, love is the fulfilling of the law, for love worketh no ill to his brother. And so he comes right on now, in the epistle, to this great theme of love.

And it says, this is the message that ye heard from him, from the beginning, that we should love one another. This is the great commandment that he comes to now. And were not to be as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother, wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his

brother's righteous.

I want to assume some familiarity, on your part, with the story of Cain and Abel. It was referred to last week, in fact, expounded, and there was reference to it, I think, even last night. Now the reason that Cain slew his brother, was jealousy, as it says here.

His own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. At first sight it would seem, that the reason why Abel was accepted, and Cain not, was that Cain's works were righteous, and his brother's were evil. But I think we've got to look a little closer, a little deeper.

When you go to the Genesis story, it's quite clear that the reason for Abel's acceptance, was the offering he brought to Abel, and his offering, the Lord had respect. And you remember, he brought the firstlings of his flock, and they were slain before the Lord, and the blood was poured out upon the altar. Cain, however, brought vegetables, the fruit of the ground.

Well, we know, do we not, that, or we know that we can assume, that God must have made it clear, that without the shedding of blood, is no remission of sins, even to Adam and Eve. And the blood sacrifices were instituted, just as soon, as Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden. God had said, although you must submit to the disciplines of the fall, and have toil and labor, sickness and death, you may nonetheless, if you repent, walk with me.

But in all that you may see that sin is serious, and it can only be put away in a just way, you must bring a sacrificial beast. And they did. Again and again, Adam used to go to his place of prayer, and confess things were wrong, and slay a lamb, and come away with peace.

And so, Cain and Abel knew that fact. And although it is true, that Abel was a keeper of sheep, and therefore, perhaps, getting a sheep was a little easier than for Cain, though I'm quite sure Cain could have got one. It was a difficult thing for Abel to do, nonetheless, because to kill a lamb meant to say that you were wrong.

When you saw that little lamb dying instead of you, you couldn't say, it's Cain's fault. It was designed to break the author's heart. And it was because Cain wouldn't have his heart broken, he wouldn't admit it was wrong, he was wrong, he would insist it was Abel's fault, that quarrel which apparently, one can assume, took place.

That he said, no, I'm not going to do it that way. My sin, what I've done, I haven't done anything really, but it's not bad enough for that. And he brought something that had no blood in it.

It didn't speak of judgment. Well, maybe Abel found it difficult. Abel found it difficult.

And you know, the fundamentalist should find it much easier to come by the way of the blood than the modernist, but he doesn't. Not a bit. I know all about the blood.

In a sense, we're keepers of sheep, if you like. It's no easier for a fundamentalist to confess and repent of sin than a modernist. And it was a big thing the day when Abel took the knife and said, all right, it's no good.

I can't get right, but this way. And I'm going this way. Lord, it's me.

And when he saw the blood flow, he knew it was him. Then God forgave him and cleansed him and gave him peace, and he came back to Abel with such joy and asked his forgiveness. Thank you very much, said, came back to Cain.

Thank you very much, said Cain. But he was left high and dry, and he was jealous. And the jealousy led to hatred.

And you know, you can find yourself not loving your brother because he's so free. He's so joyous. He's so quick to repent, and he always seems to come out into the sunlight.

And you won't. And you can hate your brother for that reason. And he says, you're not to be like Cain.

You're to be like Abel. And the only place where you can love your brother and I can love my brother is when we are Abels together. Cains do not love Abels.

They appreciate them sometimes in better moments, but they don't love them. Only Abels love Abels. And that's the place where love for the brethren is begotten.

You say to me, well, how can I become an Abel? And I would simply say this by confessing that you're a Cain. That's the way you become an Abel. Cain was a tiller of the ground.

And God showed me some time ago that was me. I'm a tiller of the ground, always striving. Always hoping for more blessing by more doing.

Always hoping to be used, bettered more than the other person if I can do more. A tiller of the ground. And naturally I don't come Abels way.

How do I become an Abel? By saying, Lord, I am a Cain, if ever there was one. I'm a tiller of the ground. I'm so easily jealous.

I try to get right with Thee by effort and struggle and doing better. And I simply hate going that other way. I'm a Cain.

God be merciful, Lord, to a Cain. You're an Abel. You're an Abel the very moment you confess that you're a Cain.

Take the elder son and the younger son. The elder son who never got into the feast of the younger son who did. How do you become a younger son who's brought by grace into the feast? By confessing you're an elder son.

That's me, Lord. I'm an elder son. Saying, Father, I've served Thee many years and I don't seem to get the blessing that others do.

Say, Lord, I'm full of this criticism of others. I'm an elder son. God forgive an elder son.

You're a younger son then and you're brought by grace into the feast. And there in that feast all the younger sons laugh at one another. They have their moments but that's because they get out.

Oh yes, if you criticize your brother you're better than him. You're an elder son then, aren't you? You're a Cain. But when you say, yes, I am a Cain.

I am an elder son. You become an Abel at the foot of the cross. And there there's the beginning of love.

We'll go on to this whole question of love. But you see how it leads on. Here it is.

Verse 10 is the transition one. In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil. Whosoever doeth not righteousness, is playing with sin, compromising with sin, learning to live peacefully with sin, is not of God.

Neither he that loveth not his brother, who's learned to live with resentment, who's learned to be quite at home with no fellowship with his brother Christians, who's got things against this one and that one, and he doesn't see it inconsistent with a new life. You've every reason to doubt if we persist in that, that something was basically wrong somewhere. Don't get the idea that doing righteousness and loving your brother is the way to become a Christian, is the way to be born of God, or is it the way into fellowship? It isn't.

It's the evidence that you are. How do you get into fellowship? By Abel's way, the way of the blood. I must needs go home by the way of the blood.

There's no other way but this. You don't come back. You don't get born again in the first case by trying to be better and more loving, but by confessing you're hopeless and that you don't love, by confessing you're an Abel.

You don't get back by trying to be a better Cain, but by confessing you are a Cain, with no hope at all but in the grace of God and the blood of Jesus. And so you come. And there in that circle, we learn love.

We have to learn it even when we're all Abels. And that's what he has to teach us in the following chapters. Well, God helps some of us not to delay, but come back to judge sin.

If it needs something radical, if you're going way back to see where it all began, how you began to tolerate it, if it means like plucking out a right eye, I beg you, dear one, it is better to enter into life made than having two eyes to be cast into hell. That's what Jesus said. God helped us take the path of the saint, to grieve over and repent of sin and go the way that Abel went and wash at the foot of the cross.

Let us pray. Dear Lord, thy word talks about the deceitfulness of sin. And we don't come to this place of tolerating and living with sin.

Suddenly it deceives us. And slowly we get used to it. And we rationalize it.

If there's something like that in our lives, oh, God, wake us up this morning. Wake me up, show me. And may we take the saint's path again.

Abel's path. The path that leads to thee and to peace and mercy and to the happy experience of all that flows from new birth to thyself, Lord Jesus. We thank thee that there is plenteous redemption in the blood that has been shed.

It even includes people who have done what we've done. There is joy for all the members in the sorrows of the head. How we thank thee for this hope that will never leave us in despair.

And may some of us find our way to thy feet, to thy cross, to mercy and peace. Even today we ask it in thy dear name. Amen.

The grace, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18645.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/roy-hession/light-life-and-love-part-3/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net