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VOLUME 82 SEPTEMBER 2013
IMITATORS OF LOVE (part one)

Greetings in the name of the Beloved Lamb of God—Christ Jesus, the Righteous!

As always, our prayer is that this letter finds you blessed in every area of your life and finds you walking in all of His promises which are always yes and amen!

Well, by the time you receive this edition of the Living Logos newsletter, I will likely either be in transit to India or will have already arrived there...

Again, my itinerary is to fly out of Atlanta on Friday, October 4th and arrive in Bangalore on Sunday, October 6th. I will fly domestically from Bangalore to Madurai on Thursday, October 10th, and will then fly from Bangalore to Chennai on Monday, October 14th. My flight out of India will be in the early morning of Saturday, October 19th... I remind you of this to ask you to please keep this itinerary on your calendar and pray for the Lord's will to be done in every place I set my foot. May my mouth be used to speak the oracles of God and may my hands be used to deliver the Lord's power and manifold wisdom into the lives of whosoever I lay them on. The Lord is faithful who also will do it! Amen!

I am so excited about this trip in that I know how fruitful it will inevitably be! I plan on giving you a detailed description of what transpired in next month's Living Logos. So be on the lookout for it in the beginning of November.

Again, thank you to everyone who supported me on this trip. I really appreciate everyone's faithful and gracious gifts towards it. May an abundant harvest be returned to each of you for your financial support! Like I said last month, you are indeed going with me so this harvest will be yours as well! To God be all the glory forevermore!

As for this month's teaching, I want to begin this month sharing with you a profound revelation that the Lord gave to our Sunday Afternoon Fellowship within the past few months.

We began around April during these Sunday gatherings, talking about the wonderful love that God has for us (refer back to Living Logos volume 79 "Faith in His Love"). Well, the Lord then led us to begin studying the love of God towards us from a different slant than we are used to hearing it. We began studying His love for us by looking at some scriptures where God tells us how to love other people.

Someone might ask, "How is studying verses that teach us how to love other people going to teach us about God's love for us?" The answer is simple, but let me answer that question by asking you a question: **Would God give us a standard for loving others that He Himself is not already walking in?** In other words, would God tell us to do something that He is not already doing? The answer to those two questions are—Of course, He wouldn't! Our Heavenly Father commands us to treat our brothers and sisters a certain way because He wants us to imitate Him! He wants us to forgive, to do good, and to have compassion on our fellow man because this is how God acts towards us. So, in essence, you could say that everything God admonishes

or commands us to do in His Word can be summarized in one statement—*Be like Me*.

MIMICKING THE FATHER

This is verified in Ephesians 5:1 when the Apostle Paul gives us what I believe to be the most concise statement of truth concerning our role and responsibility on the earth... He said, “Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children.”

You know, there are not too many things that can bless a parent more than when their child attempts to mimic them. At a young age, our kids will repeat what we say. Many times they will want to do what we do vocationally when they grow up. They simply just get interested in what we are interested in because of their love and admiration for us. Then when they grow up, what a joy it is to any parent when their child follows their footsteps by maybe choosing the school that their parents went to or following the same career path that they did. Now, of course, this is not always the path that our children are to take, but when it comes to our Heavenly Father, following exactly in His footsteps is always a good idea. My point is that it pleases any parent to either seeing their young child doing their best to be like their daddy or seeing their grown up children making the mature decision to be about their father’s business.

So how about the Lord? Do you reckon Father God is pleased when His children begin to imitate Him? I guarantee you that this ministers to His heart as it does to any of us who are parents here.

But, you see, why this statement is what I believe to be all of the commandments rolled up into one is because ultimately everything God has told us do in the Word of God is a reflection of what He is already doing. In other words, in all of His commandments and admonitions, he is saying, “Sons and daughters, just be like me.”

For example, when we walk in love in general—which is the royal law—we are simply mimicking our Heavenly Father who is love. Paul actually explains this in the next verse (Ephesians 5:2) when he says, “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us...” What the Apostle was saying was that walking in love is essentially imitating the Lord because He practices the same towards us.

As a matter of fact if you back up to chapter 4 and look the admonitions that Paul gave the church of Ephesus, you will find how the Apostle Paul was leading up to this truth in chapter 5 and verse 1.

LOVE CANNOT LIE

He begins by telling us in verse 25 to put away lying and to speak truth with our neighbor. Why do you reckon telling the truth and not lying is so important to the Lord? Why do you suppose it was important enough for the Holy Spirit to inspire Paul to write this? You got it... It is because He does not (more accurately, cannot) lie! It is not part of His nature! It is a complete violation to the truth that He is!

In fact, we are told earlier in Ephesians chapter 4 to speak the truth *in love* (verse 25), signifying that speaking the truth is what love does. **Now you can speak the truth and not do it in love, but you cannot walk in love and not speak the truth.** If you lie, you are not walking in love

towards the one you are lying to because the majority of the time someone lies they are thinking only of covering up something and protecting themselves.

And know this—this is the reason that God cannot lie... It is because He is love! He is faithful to what He has said. So if the Lord makes you a promise, He will surely bring it to pass because He loves you that much!

LOVE HAS ANGER

Then in verses 26&27 we are told how love knows how to channel its anger... When someone does something that angers us, we have to see the root cause of that hurtful action which is the devil. We must understand that flesh and blood is not who we are wrestling against but that it is the devil who is behind the scenes inspiring the offense. Then we can truly be angry and sin not. We sin when we focus our anger on our brothers and sisters—allowing ourselves to become bitter, resentful, offended, and unforgiving towards them. However, it is okay to be angry when that anger is channeled towards the devil.

And this is what the Lord does as well... He knows who the real enemy is and His anger is aimed at him. **His anger and hatred is towards the sin and not towards the sinner.** And why does He hate sin and the kingdom of darkness so much? It is because He loves us so much, and sin and Satan are seeking to steal, kill, and destroy us. Therefore, He does not let the sun go down on His wrath against all ungodliness. Why? It is because He loves the sinner and hates the sin—all because the sin hurts the ones His love is poured out on, namely you and I.

Even in the Old Testament, the Lord was expressing His nature of love towards the children of Israel...

You see, this is one of the reasons that the Lord gave them the Law. We know from Paul's epistle to the Romans that one of the main purposes of the Law was to reveal sin and cause His people to cry out for a Savior. But another reason that the Lord gave them commandments was for the same reason any good and loving parent gives their kids commandments. Why? It is because they love them and they know the effects of those actions on their children! For instance, they tell them to look both ways before they cross the street because they are ultimately protecting them. Now the world might say that disciplining our children is wrong and detrimental to them but, hey, who do you think is really loving their children the most—God or the world? I guarantee you God loves His children much more! So when He says, "spare the rod and spoil the child" we can understand, knowing that He is the epitome of love, that this is what love does... It will make every attempt to eradicate the sin before the sin yields the death.

But my point is that love is not passive and all-embracing. It does not just overlook the thing that is killing the one it loves. Love will seek to expose and remove that thing that is working death in the object of its love.

Friends, we have embraced what we call a "seeker-sensitive" type of love that is absolutely ungodly. When we ignore the absolutes and sweep the truth under the table all because we don't want to offend, we are no longer walking in the pure love of God. But it is much better to speak the truth in love with the risk of offending than to ignore the darkness and watch the person continue to not walk

in all of their God-given potential or even experience death in an area of their life.

LOVE DOES NOT STEAL; LOVE GIVES

Then in verse 28 we see yet another reflection of God in the form of a commandment towards us... “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give to him who has need.” Actually, there are two aspects of God’s loving nature contained in this verse.

Number one, God tells us not to steal... And why does He command us not to steal? It is because He does not steal! But why do so many in the church today attribute the characteristics of a thief to God. For example, the majority of the church today blames God for taking their health to teach them something, stripping them of their finances to humble them, or “taking” their loved one because He needed another angel in heaven. But is this true? No, because if God were taking things from us then He has become the thief and contradicting His standard for us. So we should clearly see why the Lord is against stealing? It is because the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy and He is ultimately against us imitating the devil!

So how do we imitate God and not the devil? The answer is by doing what the second half of this verse says—being a giver! That is who God is! So if you want to imitate God, you need to learn to be a giver! This is revealed in John 10:10 when after Jesus described the thief, He then described God’s nature by saying He had come to give life and life more abundantly.

Then Paul tells us in this verse what the whole purpose of our secular job is... It is that we may have something to give to him who has need! Wow! That means that our whole attitude for working should be so that we can have enough to bless others with. And why? It is because this is who Love is! God is a giver and that is what He lives to do! Selfishness only works for itself so that it can gather more into its own barns; love works because it wants to have more to give! Therefore, God wants us to “live to give” like He focuses on supplying all of our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus! Thanks be to God!

THE WORDS OF LOVE

Then verse 29 tells how we need to watch what we let come out of our mouths by focusing on how our words are affecting those who hear them. Paul says that our words are not to tear down but to build up. Our words are to impart grace to the hearers, not condemnation.

Again, is this not what God’s Word does for us? It builds us up, it edifies us, it feeds our spirits, and it imparts grace to us for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. In this verse, God is saying that He wants our words to have the same effect on others as His Word does on us. Now that, my friends, is an awesome and wonderful responsibility!

You see, there are different ways in which we can hear God’s Word. Some only hear it through the filter of condemnation, but this is not how God spoke it. His Word was intended to minister to us the

same way as Paul said here our words are to minister to others...

1. None of His words are meant to “corrupt.” This means that nothing He says to us will ever yield death. They always produce life. His words will always lead to our fruit being fresh and flourishing.
2. All of His words are good and are for necessary edification. This means all that He says is good, beneficial, and edifying. It will always build up and benefit the hearer and will never leave the person thinking–“What was the point of Him telling me that?”
3. His words always impart grace to the hearers... He said over in Colossians that our words should always be with grace. This is how God talks. Do you want to know what language God speaks in? It is grace! **Grace is the language of love.** So if God told us that our speech is always to be with grace, then how can we believe that His Words are not going to always be “laced with grace”?

LOVE DOES NOT GRIEVE

Then verse 30 has an eye opening truth... Paul says in it that we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit.

Now, again, will God give us a standard that He is not already living by? No! So this should tell us that He tells us not to grieve the Holy Spirit because He does not grieve us! Wow! What a powerful truth!

Now it's important to understand what this word “grieve” means... It comes from the Greek word “lupeto” and means to cause injury or distress. Have you ever known someone who just had a tendency to injure you with their words? They would say something that just plain hurt you, leaving you saying, “Ouch!” They had a sharp tongue and when they made remarks or statements, they were rather pointed and injurious. For instance, maybe you made a comment like–“Oh, I didn't realize that” and then they would say something like–“Well, you should have!” That is just condemning! I mean, why would we reinforce to someone the mistake they made when they are already aware of it? How does that profit them if they already realize what they have done?

This is not how God wants our speech to be. And why? It is because His Words are not like this towards us! He does not talk to us like many believe that He does. There are many believers who think that God will remind us of our mistakes and shortcomings after we already realize them. This is not God! How many times do we hear of Christians who say, “Man, the Holy Spirit just condemned the mess out me today! He let me know how wrong what I did was and sent me to the woodshed. He told me, ‘I ought to be ashamed of myself and that I should feel bad about what I did.’”

Now I certainly believe that part of the Holy Spirit's ministry is to let us know when we are missing the mark, but what I totally disagree with is how many believe He does this. He does not grieve us anymore than He wants us to grieve Him. He is not going to send us into distress nor is He going to attempt to cause injury to our soul.

Friends, love does not condemn! Love always seeks to speak words of life that build up and don't tear down! And this is exactly how God's Word and God's Spirit seek to communicate to you!

LOVE'S ATTITUDE

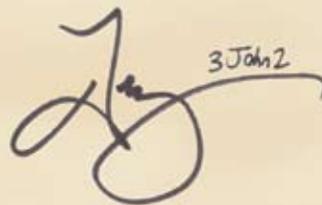
Then in verses 31&32, we can see God's attitude towards us perfectly described... The Apostle Paul said in verse 31 to let all bitterness, wrath, anger, and evil speaking be put away from us, with all malice. Then we see the culmination of Paul's admonitions to us in verse 32 before he declares in 5:1 to therefore be imitators of God by saying that we are to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, and forgiving one another even as God in Christ forgave us.

Friends, I believe that these two verses describe God in a nutshell, but many Christians see God as the opposite... They see Him as easily getting bitter with us. They see Him as full of wrath and angry. And they certainly do not see Him as being kind and tenderhearted towards us. But just as the last part of verse 32 says, we are to forgive one another even as God in Christ forgave us.

You see, every attitude and behavior that Paul just told us to adopt in verses 25-32 perfectly led into his statement in chapter 5 and verse 1 where he said, "Therefore, just imitate your Heavenly Father as dear children should!" In other words, he just summed up everything he said in these verses by saying—"Hey, just be like your daddy because He does not practice all of these vices... He cannot lie to us! He will not steal from us! His only desire is to bless us and add to us! His words towards us are always edifying and exhorting! His heart is never to injure or condemn us because He is not angry, wrathful, or down in the mouth about us in the least! In fact, He is rich in kindness, compassion, and forgiveness! So just be like Him!"

My brothers and sisters, begin to see God in the light of His expectations for us! See Him the way that you know He desires for you to be! This will undoubtedly open up a new understanding of the nature and character of God that perhaps you have never seen before! Selah!

Victoriously,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Trey Dickerson', with the text '3 John 2' written to the right of the signature.