

*Main Idea: Compare your nature to the affections of God and of the devil to see whose child you are.*

Introduction: Fronds and Fruit

**PRAY AND READ.**

Intro: John’s purpose by this text is that we should compare our own nature, our own affections, with the affections of God and of the devil in order to clearly discern whose children we are.

I want to approach the comparison by noting three similarities between the Love of God and the hatred of the devil:

1. Both affections settle upon objects opposed to themselves.
2. Both subjects seek to assimilate those opposed to themselves.
3. Both subjects exhibit a willingness to produce death to achieve his ends.

**1. Hate or Love: Opposition**

A. Affection: a mental state or emotion

B. The devil’s hatred, as exhibited by Cain

i. Directed at one who stood opposed to his comfort, his sense of self-righteousness (v. 12 – “why...? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous”)

a) Rehearse history – Cain was angry at feeling rejected/accused – he directed this anger at his brother, because his brother had what he wanted: acceptance/approbation

b) Candlish: “Let me ask myself a plain but pointed question. Is there no child of God, no godly man or woman of my acquaintance, the thought of whom, or the sight of whom, – or his or her talk in the field, – troubles me and makes me feel uncomfortable? Many professing Christians I know and like. Many who pass for serious and evangelical I can meet and converse with, easily and satisfactorily enough... It is not, strictly speaking, envy, or mere jealousy of another’s superior

excellence. It is the tacit rebuke administered to my shortcoming and sin; – the awakening of a lurking consciousness of something wrong in my state of heart or way of life, – the unsettling of my security, – the begetting in me of – I scarcely know what to call it – dissatisfaction, apprehension, an uneasy and unpleasant feeling of my not being altogether, in some particulars, what I ought to be, or might be; – it is that which disturbs me, in the presence of some child of God, or in the thought of such an one, as an unquestionable type of godliness. Ah! it is a dangerous symptom; you brother, as well as I, may give good heed to it. It is the very germ of Cain’s murderous mood. It may not lead you to slay your Abel; him or her who is thus obnoxious to you; whose eminent nearness to God causes you to be too sensible of your distance. You have other ways of getting rid of the troubler of your peace without raising the cry, Crucify him; away with him. You can evade his company, keep out of the hearing of his voice, and elude the glance of his eye. You can shut him out of your mind, and bid him be to you as if he was not. Or you may try another plan. You may open your ears to whispers against him; you may sharpen your sight to discover faults and follies in him; you may “sit and speak against your brother, slandering your own mother’s son,” if by any means you can make him out to be not so very immaculate or so very heavenly, after all, but that you may stand your ground and pass muster beside him in the end. What is all that but slaying your brother; slaying him virtually if not literally; slaying him very cruelly? And wherefore? “Because your own works are evil and your brother’s righteous.”

- c) TRANSITION: Notice: the hatred thus described is directed toward the very righteousness, the same godliness, precisely the love that is opposed to such hatred... even so:

## C. The love of God, as exhibited in Christ

- i. (v. 16) “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us.

—  
the love of God is directed toward the very unrighteousness, the same ungodliness, precisely the hatred that is opposed to such love:

- a) **Romans 5:6–8, 10**

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die;

yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us... when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son

## 2. Death or Life: Assimilation

- A. The devil's hatred— Here is another way to slay one's brother, a way to (attempt to) escape the sense of condemnation brought on by comparison to superior righteousness, a way not mentioned by Candlish: convince (trip) the righteous to descend, to become evil, like one's self – thus the offending comparison is abolished... and then what?
  - a) (v. 15) – “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” – the object of hatred is assimilated to the devilish nature—and also dies
- B. God's love – works similarly... but in reverse: the love of God is directed toward those who hate, and where his love prevails:
  - a) (v. 14) – “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.” – in parallel fashion, the objects of God's love become like him in love, which produces life

## 3. Enemies or Self: Death

- A. The devil's hatred seeks the death of enemies
  - i. Cain – murdered his brother – the one Cain made to be his enemy by directing his anger at feeling rejected toward Abel. Perhaps this is “the beginning” Jesus referred to:
    - a) **John 8:44**  
You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, ...
  - ii. Candlish notes that wherever we have the coupling of an uneasy conscience and an unbroken heart, we have the makings of a Cain, who will seek relief from the uneasy conscience, not by humbling self and coming to Christ in repentance—but rather by directing

murderous hatred toward the righteous, blaming their uprightness for my discomfort.

B. God's love submits *His Son* to death – *for* His enemies

i. **John 3:16–17**

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

ii. (v. 16) – Not only are we to love, but to love *in this same self-sacrificial manner*: "...we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

Conclusion: If no one can discern self-sacrificial love in you—you have no reason to think that you are born of God. Versions of self-sacrifice that don't come from faith in God and that aren't directed toward the glory of God and the good of your brother as God defines it, don't count. Failure to love isn't neutral. It's hatred. And hatred is murder. And a murderer is a child of the devil.

I suspect most who hear me have a different problem. Some Godward self-sacrificial love is detectable; at the very least, others would say so, but oh! How little. And how much is found of a Cain-like desire to self-justify at the expense of those perceived as more righteous, how much of a resentment of those deemed more holy, how much of a tendency toward desiring their downfall as a means of alleviating the discomfort of an unflattering comparison!

We live, even as children of God, between two poles, the old man and the new at war within us—ever gospel-pressed to more deny the one and to more embrace the other. But what shall we do with the devilish Cain we perceive within us? Shall we seek to deceive ourselves and deny that such wickedness yet survives in us? Shall we seek to hood-wink others and justify ourselves? What is it to mortify this flesh?

How to pursue sanctification?

A moment ago I said that the gospel goads us to more embrace the Christ-like nature planted in us at our regeneration. “Embrace” means to acts more in accordance with.

But it must also mean to more depend upon that Christ whose nature the children of God share. More deeply, more consistently, more constantly – those who are children of God, detecting Cain infecting their members, need not descend into angry bitterness that results from the uneasy conscience with unbroken heart – for the heart is broken and humbled before God, and the conscience is cleansed by the blood of Christ. We are to lay down our lives for the brethren. But this is because we have known love. We know it because He laid down His life for us. His sacrifice covers not only our sins prior to our new birth, but also our failures to live according to the Spirit after the new birth. He who does not, who cannot bring his remnants of the devil’s nature, with broken heart, to the cross—there to have his conscience washed—has no reason to hope that such wickedness is mere remnants. It must represent his nature and his parentage. But he who can, and does, bring this guilt too to the cross, does thereby show that his true nature is to love God, and his brethren, though he may mourn over the faltering weakness of that love.