TO LOVE AS JESUS LOVED

THE IMPACT OF HATRED
Is your spiritual life without direction, wandering aimlessly about without accomplishing anything for God? A tragic result of hatred is that it impedes a believer’s spiritual growth.

The person mentioned in 1 John 2:11 is blinded because he is walking in darkness (not that the darkness is in him or that he is a lost person). The sin of animosity has dominated him and he cannot find his way! He has no spiritual judgment to perceive that he has lost his way and is making no headway in his Christian life. The only atmosphere that is conducive to spiritual growth is the atmosphere of spiritual light—of love. Just as the fruits and flowers need sunshine, God’s people need love and need to love if we are going to grow.

The tragedy of hatred is always twofold. First is the harm it does to the neighbor; second is the harm it does to the person who hates. Hatred, according to John, blurs vision and sets into place basic disorientation and confusion. Love clears the head; hatred confuses the head. There is an even greater danger: we become like that which we do. When we choose the strategy or tactics of darkness we inevitably end up under the control of darkness.

Martin Luther warns us of the danger of a type of hatred which we always tend to justify namely, retribution toward those who first harm us. Luther warns, “See to it that he who hurts you does not cause you to become evil like him… for he is the victor who changes another man to become like himself while he himself remains unchanged.” This is the double tragedy of the way of darkness; the person who adopts the methods of evil for whatever reason, experiences the result of which Luther warned. His life is changed and his roadway is changed; therefore, the person or situation which first hurt him wins a twofold victory.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT PRODUCES LOVE
When we are walking in the light, the "seed of the Word" (Luke 8:11) can take root and bear fruit. And, the first cluster the Spirit produces is love!

Hatred is the mark and badge of walking in darkness. It is a malignant attitude that wishes malice upon the despised brothers. Animosity is the harboring of a bitter spirit against a brother. Instead of promoting his welfare, it desires to injure and even ruin him.

A Christian who walks in love is always experiencing some new joy because the "fruit of the Spirit" is love and joy. When we blend "love" and "joy", we will have "peace"—and words, walking in the light, walking in love, is the secret of Christian growth, which nearly always begins with love.

Now, all of us must admit that we cannot generate Christian love under our own power. By nature, we are selfish and hateful. It is only as God’s Spirit floods our hearts with love that we, in turn, can love one another. “and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom. 5:5). It is a fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit of God makes the commandment, "Love one another," into a new and exciting day-by-day experience. If we walk in the light, God’s Spirit produces love. If we walk in darkness, our selfish spirit produces hatred.