

1 John 3:11-24 Answers Love One Another

Introduction: In the previous section, John detailed how genuine faith in Christ's coming will change our lives. In particular, John declared that the one who does not love his brother is not of God, **3:10** (read aloud). This statement serves as the spring-board to the next section (today's section): Love One Another.

Word Study: "love" (3:11) is from *agapao*. The word love in English is so used and misused that its meaning is confusing. Perhaps it was that way in the first century also. John is going to help us understand what it means to love the brethren.

Is love a feeling or a commitment? What is love? Love can be very fickle. "Love is a many splendored thing. How do I love thee? Let me count the ways . . . He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me, he loves me not."

Would you pass John's love test? (Rhetorical).

*****How can we know that we have passed out of death into life (3:11-15)?** We know because of our love for the brothers, 3:14. This is John's evidence of genuine salvation.

According to 3:11, what message had they heard from the beginning? They had heard all along that we should love one another. This was nothing new.

— 3:12 —

What negative example of love did John give in 3:12? One way to understand true love is by learning what love is not: Cain's murder of Abel illustrates the opposite of love.

What warning did John give in 3:12a? We should not be like Cain.

What does it mean for Cain to be "of the evil one" (3:12)? See back to 3:8. It means Cain was in concert with Satan, that Satan rather than God was his father, that Cain was influenced by the devil (even as Eve was) and thus murdered his brother. Note the link between Satanic influence and murder. Jesus also mentioned this link:

ESV **John 8:44** You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning . . .

Demonology: Satan is alive and well on planet earth. He is a sinister minister of evil.¹ John 5:19 states, "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one". It is bad enough that fallen mankind has a sin nature, but adding fuel to the fire is the devil himself, who is actively working evil in the world.

Joke: John asked the question: “Why did he murder him?” Why did Cain murder his brother? The answer is obvious: Because he was able (Abel)!

In 3:12, John asked and answered his own question. According to John, why did Cain murder Able (3:12b)? It was because Cain’s deeds were evil and Abel’s were righteous.

ESV **Genesis 4:6-7** The LORD said to Cain, “. . . If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.” [Cain did not do well but instead let sin rule over his actions].

Detectives trying to solve a murder mystery always look for motive. Based on John’s analysis of why Cain murdered Abel, what was Cain’s motive (3:12b)? It may have been jealousy or even a guilty conscience.

Deadly Doctrine: Matthew Henry pointed out that Cain slew Abel for religion’s sake (Vol 6, p. 868). He was vexed that God accepted Abel’s sacrifice and not his own. False religion can be deadly, as expressed in the cynical bumper sticker, “Lord, save me from your people”. Of course people like Cain are not God’s people, they are Satan’s people, but they are often quite religious. They claim to be God’s people.

— 3:13 —

Based on 3:13, what motive did Cain have for killing Abel? The murder grew out of Cain’s hatred toward Abel.

What take-away application did John offer his readers in 3:13? The application is that we should not be surprised when the world hates us. Having the right expectations is important in our walk of faith. If you wrongly expect that if you are right with God your way will be made easier in the world, you will be disappointed and your faith likely shaken.

Truth in Advertising: Becoming a Christian means the world may very well hate you. Most of the time Christians will not win any popularity contests with the world. Just look how the media treats Tim Tebow or Phil Robertson of the Duck Dynasty. Praise for transvestite Bruce Jenner but scorn for Tebow.

Matthew Henry: “Wonder not then that the serpentine world hates and hisses at you who belong to the Seed of the woman that is to bruise the serpent’s head” (Vol 6, p. 868)

ESV **John 15:18** If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you . . .

How would you define hate (3:13)? Hate is from *miseo* (miserly); the Greek word means to detest, to abhor or to persecute in hatred (BAGD, p. 522). Just as true love is expressed in deeds, so too hatred is expressed in persecution and opposition.

— 3:14-15 —

What evidence of a person's salvation does John give in 3:14-15? It is not because you had a dramatic "road to Damascus" experience or because you walked the isle in tears or went through some confirmation process or were baptized. The evidence is love for others in the church. Whereas the world hates the brethren (3:13), true believers love the brethren (3:14).

According to 3:14b, if you don't love the brethren, where do you abide? You don't abide in Jesus, you abide in death. You live in death. There are people within the visible church whose lack of love demonstrates they are not true believers (Marshall, p. 190). This is called dead orthodoxy.

Application: Do you love the brethren? How do you show it?

In 3:15, how can John assert that to simply feel hatred toward someone makes you a murderer? "All hatred is embryonic murder" (Marshall, p. 190). Murder is the fruit of a bad root. Outward, physical murder stems from a bad heart condition. From a human point of view of course I would much rather you hate me than murder me. However, from God's viewpoint you are as liable to His judgment for hatred as you would be for murder.

ESV **Matthew 5:21-22** You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment . . ."

We must deal with our heart condition:

ESV **Matthew 23:27-28** . . . you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Why did John point out that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him (3:15)? John wanted to start with an obvious truth and then reason backwards to the equally true statement that no hater of the brothers has eternal life abiding in him either.

******How can we know true love when we see it (3:16-18)?** Jesus' example of giving his life for us shows true love in deed and truth.

ESV **Leviticus 19:18** . . . you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

— 3:16 —

******How do we know love?**

According to 3:16, what ought we do to? We ought to lay down our lives for the brothers, just as Jesus laid down His life for us.

ESV **Philippians 2:17** Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

Can you think of a scenario where you might literally need to lay down your life for the brothers (3:16)? Those who travel to dangerous areas with the Gospel may well die because of it (due to sickness, accident, criminals or antichrist activity).

— 3:17 —

Someone once said he thought if it came to it that he would be willing to die for his faith; the real problem he faced was for living for the Lord every day! Although it is quite possible we might have to lay down our lives for the brothers (3:16), what more likely scenario did John give in 3:17 for daily laying down our lives? We lay down our lives for the brothers by opening our hearts and giving out of what we have to meet their needs.

ESV **James 2:15-16** If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?"

What is the answer to the question in 3:17? The love of God does not abide in such a person.

Example: A church planter's house in Sri Lanka was badly in need of paint. When asked why he did not paint it, he told of the many local church leaders who lived in grass huts and barely had enough food to eat each week. In light of such great need he could not justify spending the money on paint.

How often do we consider our spending habits and lifestyle in light of the needs of other believers, especially in frontier areas and undeveloped countries? Do we pass the test?

Paul took up a collection for the impoverished church in the Middle East. Here is what he wrote to the church in Greece to encourage them to give:

ESV **2 Corinthians 8:9-15** . . . you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich . . . I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

— 3:18 —

What final urging did John give in 3:18?

******How can we be reassured we really are of the truth even when our hearts condemn us (3:19-24)?** The words “by this” (3:19a) refer back to the previous paragraph about us loving the brethren by giving to meet their needs.

What did John mean by heart (3:19)? It is from *kardia* (cardiac); in Greek thought, the heart was figuratively said to be the seat of physical, spiritual and mental life (mind, will, emotions), BAGD, p. 403. Here it means conscience (Rienecker, p. 792).

— 3:20 —

Why might our hearts condemn us even though we are of the truth (3:20)? Our hearts are evidently quite fickle! John is writing concerning a potential crisis of faith. Many people beat themselves up unjustly. Sometimes people chronically doubt their salvation and feel all tortured about it for no good reason. As John wrote in 3:19, our deeds of love should “reassure” (3:19) our heart.

ESV **Jeremiah 17:9** The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

Diablo: It does not help that Satan is the accuser of the brethren. He casts doubt and dispersions and accusations. “Devil” translates *diabolos* (diabolical); *dia* means through and *ballo* means to throw. He devil seeks to hurl accusations through us: You don’t love God! You’re a failure! You’re not saved! No one who acts like you do could be saved! You are not forgiven!

ESV **Revelation 12:9-10** . . . the great dragon . . . that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world . . . the accuser of our brothers . . . who accuses them day and night before our God.

— 3:20 —

Why did John point out that God is greater than our heart and that He knows everything (3:20)? John said this to give perspective. If we believe in Jesus and love the brethren, we are not to give into doubt and despair. God knows everything and is the perfect judge, not our hearts. Sometimes of course we do sin and do feel condemned, but we need to remember that Christ has forgiven us.

ESV **1 Corinthians 4:3-5** But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

How many of your sins did Jesus die for on the cross? All of them: past, present and future.

— 3:21 —

According to 3:21, what if our heart does not condemn us? In that case we have confidence before God, especially in prayer. It is double good; your heart does not condemn you and neither does God!

— 3:22 —

Based on 3:22, under what conditions can you expect to receive from God whatever you ask for? You can expect to receive what you ask for when you keep His commandments and do what pleases Him.

ESV **John 15:7** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Why is it true that if you believe in Jesus and love the brothers that you will receive from God what you ask for (3:22)? It is supposed that we will not desire anything that is contrary to the honor and glory of God or our own good.

ESV **Psalms 66:18** If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

ESV **Proverbs 28:9** If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.

ESV **1 Peter 3:7** . . . husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

What about those instances where godly people do not get what they ask for (such as Paul's prayer for the thorn in this side to be removed)? John is making a general statement of truth.

— 3:23 —

******What is the most fundamental command we have from God?** He commands us to believe in Jesus and to obey Jesus' command that we love one another.

Fact: Belief and love go together. Either one without the other is deficient.

— 3: 24 —

According to 3:24, who abides in God's love? Those who keep His commandments abide in God and God abides in them!

ESV **John 15:10** If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love . . .

Based on 3:24, in what sense does God abide in those who keep His commandments? God the Holy Spirit indwells all believers.

ESV **John 14:16-17** . . . I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

ESV **Ephesians 1:13-14** . . . when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

You know you abide in God if you keep His commandments (3:24a). How do you know that God abides in you (3:24b)? You can know it by the Spirit.

So What?

What was the main point of this section (3:11-24)? What is purpose to confront or reassure?

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session (30 minutes of teaching and 15 minutes of group discussion) and are based on the text of the ESV.
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