

1John 3:16–23

True Love, Truly Expressed, Truly Assures

Thursday, May 9, 2024 • Read 1John 3:16–23

Questions from the Scripture text: What do we know (v16)? By Christ's doing what? Who else ought to do this for whom? What does the person in v17 have? And what does he see? But what does he do with his heart? What is the rhetorical question, and what is its implied answer? How does he address them in v18? To what must our love not be limited? In what must our love be expressed? For it to have what quality? Of what will this assure us about ourselves (v19a)? Even before Whom (v19b)? But what might happen with our internal assurance (v20a)? But what hope do we still have (v20b)? What does He know (v20c)? But if we have assurance from loving this way, what does it give us (v21)? And what does someone with this assurance do about his needs (v22a)? And what happens when he asks? What greater need is supplied already (v22b)? What two commanded, pleasing things does v23 especially highlight?

How important is sacrificial love? 1John 3:16–23 prepares us for the second serial reading in public worship on the Lord's Day. In these eight verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **sacrificial love in our hearts is used by God to assure us, even before Him.**

Love as preferring others to ourselves, v16. It has suddenly become urgent to know what love is, because this is the great distinguisher between the children of God and the children of the devil (v10–15). The definition of love is obvious: Christ laying down His life for us. Thank God that this is not only standard but power. Knowing that love is laying down our lives for one another compels us to depend only on Christ's life in us to produce Christ's love in us.

Love as compassion of the heart, v17. There are several important things to note in v17. First, it addresses the one who has this world's goods (not the one who wishes to legislate for others!). Second, the particular situation is one in which he sees the particular need. His responsibility is not to alleviate all everywhere, but those assigned to him by providence. Third, the person in question is a brother; this means that there are deacons through whom he can give to him, who will help discern whether and what sort of gift would be most helpful. Fourth, what is denounced isn't the failure to donate but the shutting up of the heart. Action may be called for in many situations, but the first thing for us to see to is that our heart goes out to our brother rather than being shut up against him. There is much more here than an external rule; it is an examination of whether the heart has been conditioned by God's love. O, dear reader, open your heart to your brothers in Christ! Lay down your life for those for whom Christ has laid down His life!

Love as a help to assurance, v18–21. If the true condition of love in our heart is expressed by deeds (and not just words, v18), this is a powerful affirmation to us that we have become children of God (v19a, cf. v10–15). And since it is He alone Who produces such love, we are even assured before Him Himself (v19b)! Of course, not all have assurance, so we hold onto what God knows, not what we know (v20). But producing such love in us is one way that the Lord gives us confidence toward Himself (v21).

Loving others as an earnest of all blessing, v22–23. Since it is God Who gives us to keep His commandments and do what pleases Him (v22b), and His commandment is to believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and to love one another (v23), then if God has given this to us, surely He will give us all other (good) things that we ask of Him (v22). The logic is similar to Rom 8:32. If God has not kept back His Son from us, surely He will give us all things together with His Son, Who has merited it all for us. And if God has not kept back from us to be made like His Son in loving others, surely He will give us all other things together with this work, which is making us fit to enter and enjoy glory!

Do you see, dear reader, what a gift it is to you, if the Lord God has made you loving? Seek this gift from Him, and seek to exercise it by His grace!

Whom have you seen in need? How has your heart been opened to them? What opportunity did you take to provide for them? Who produces such love in us? How can you look to Him for more of it? Of what does it assure you?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for loving us and laying down Your life for us. Forgive us for not laying down our lives for the brethren. Forgive us for how much our hearts have been shut up from our brethren. Forgive us for having loved much more in word and tongue than in deed and truth. Grant that even if our hearts condemn us, we would have hope in You, Who are greater than our heart, and know all things, we ask through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP118A "Because He's Good, O Thank the Lord" or TPH461 "Blessed Are the Sons of God"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

First John 3 verses 16 through 23. These are God's words. By this, we know, love because he laid down his life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the Brethren. But whoever has this world's goods and sees his brother in need. And shuts his heart.

shuts up his heart from him. How does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue. But indeed, and in truth And by this, we know that we are of the truth. And shall assure our hearts before him.

For, if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart. And knows all things. Loved if our heart does not condemn us. We have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from him. Because we keep his Commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

And this is his commandment. That we should believe on the name of his son, Jesus Christ. And love one another. As he gave us commandment. Amen. As soon as this reading of God's inspired and inert word,

Many people want to know a good definition of love because inherently no that we ought to love everyone and it matters to us very much if someone else believes That we love them. And often. There's an incomplete definition of love on one or the other side. The reason has become very important here in first John 3 for us to have a good definition of love.

Is because, the scripture has just in the previous. All right, six verses defined. The distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil. On the line of love, for the Brethren. The distinction is also, of course. The line of working righteousness. But the point was made that the working of unrighteousness like Cain, whose deeds were evil and his brother's righteous it was from the same sort Source as hating and therefore being a murderer.

Of the Brethren. As Kane was the first murderer in the first example, in the Bible. Little child of the breath, the child of the devil. So we want to know what love is. Because we want to know if we are children of God. And so, this short passage before us right now, Deals with the definition of love, and verse 16.

And, The expression of Evidence by which we can see whether this definition is being met in verse 17. And how love can be used our loving. In this way can be used. Assurance of Verses 18 through 21. And if it is an insurance, Of faith for us, if it increases our insurance Assurance of that we do love in the way that the children of God love.

Then it is also. an Assurance of all other blessings or in Earnest. that which has been given ahead of time. Because of course, our love is not meriting all other blessing. Our love. Are loving others, is something that God has given to. To us to, which you will add.

All other blessing. So briefly then defining love in verse 16 by this we know love Because he laid down his life for us. He has preferred us even to himself. He endured the wrath of God on the cross. And of course, was humiliated to become like us. out of love.

Even to begin with. He says by this, we know, love because he laid down his life for us and we also Or to lay down our lives for the Brethren. So, this not only defines. What Love Is It Makes Jesus? The standard for love. Referring others to ourselves. giving up rights and expending ourselves for others.

What is sometimes called? Sacrificial? Love. But it also didn't necessarily reminds us of the only origin of this love. And that is him himself.

It is not. Merely. Flowery sounding words to say, we must love as Jesus loved. Apart from Grace, it is an impossible standard. We must love like Jesus loves. Well. Who could do that? The answer, of course, is Jesus. And so this not only defines for us. what love is preferring others to ourselves.

Expendng ourselves for the sake of others.

Out of an affection, it's not affection less. But it also tells us what the source of that Bob must be. Then we see this test of the expression of love in verse 17. Whoever has this world's goods and sees. His brother in need and shuts up his heart from him.

How does the love of God abide in him? That's very important for us to see how specific this is, and how different it is than what it sounds like. to many in our day and time. the way it is. viewed and kind of Marxist way which of course, a lie, it's not Marxism isn't Altruistic.

It's a way of controlling others, but instead of, but whoever has this world's Goods That's whoever knows there are Goods in the world. Instead of who sees, Someone in need. And knows that somebody somewhere. Dissatisfied. And certainly it's not related to Union with Christ. His brother is anybody And it has nothing to do with the heart.

So it shuts up his heart from him. Has fails to protest or legislate, or even hate the one who has Well, these things are of course, all different and in many cases opposite What's verse 17 is actually saying. But whoever has this world's goods and so has been assigned by God and God's good Providence to him rewarding probably diligence and And stewardship and Heavenly mindedness frugality.

All these sorts of things. having this world's Goods doesn't always come from those things. But there is under the blessing of God. The following is scriptural wisdom, often the result in his Providence, but it's a providential assignment. Then if you're one who has this world's Goods, then you are the one who is especially subject.

To this particular. Evidence or test of the expression of the referred to or defined in verse 16. Whoever has this world's goods and sees now there's two pieces of God's Providence, one. God's Providence that has supplied you with With not just what is necessary for you but with for your wife and your children and your parents your extended family, as he says, he Who doesn't take care of his own house.

As denied, the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. In that case, talking about, especially a widowed mother. To the point that Jesus is furious. With those who refuse to take care of parents because they have Pledged to the building project at the temple. and in that case they could even pledge it to the temple but it's what's left over.

They would happily give their own needs anyway. So, there's a bit of Providence that you have this world's Goods. beyond what is necessary? For the immediate moral obligations of your family. and then there's the providential assignment of seeing a brother in need. Particular collection connection. Sorry particular connection particular proximity.

This isn't, I'd rather comes and Panhandles by way of Email or social media or whatever. No, it might be a brother who tells him. Of his need more likely. It's the Deacon who is telling him. Because it's a brother. Who's in need? Not a neighbor. And so, there's going to be diaconate involved.

Which is why the last part is and shuts up his heart from him. he closes his heart off. He's hard to that, which the deacons have pointed out. He sees especially by those whom the Lord has given him. To oversee. That part of his Christian walk. That this brother is needing, he has the urging of the diaconate, and he is shutting up his heart.

The person in verse 17 might actually be giving to the deacons fund. The person in verse 17 might actually be Giving. More. Because the deacons have said there is a brother in need And still his heart might be shut up against him. So you see what he's saying here?

He's saying if you have received these providences from God, You have the stuff. You're in the church. God has given your brother a need. He said, deacons over you to instruct you about that need if you can receive all of that Providence and your heart does not respond by saying, I have an opportunity.

To prefer others to myself and to expend myself for the sake of a brother, just like Jesus. Loved me and gave himself up for me. Just pay attentions if you're not responding that way, Then you're not responding according to Grace, you're not responding. According to Union with Christ, you're not responding according to the fruit of the spirit.

And the love of God is not abiding in you. Now, we're going to have multiple different sorts of responses, aren't we? Because we don't just have the new nature. There is still that sinfulness That is left over from our former Nature. And so we want to be careful attention to how our heart is responding to these situations.

So that the responses that are hard-hearted And that doesn't always mean giving. Yeah, sometimes it may be unwise. Sometimes we there's a prior claim upon what we have, like wife and children. Like we mentioned earlier, But we want to watch how our heart is responding. And any response that is hard-hearted towards our needy brother, we want to mortify, because it comes from our former nature.

Comes from that which remains from when we lived in this world as children of the devil. And whatever is open-hearted and desires to follow the Bible and desires to imitate Christ. And even desires to do what is wise, which our brother might not, it might not be what our brother likes or is asking for.

But we want to do it because Good before God, it's good for our brother and it imitates Christ and it displays the difference Jesus has made in our lives. That is the sort of response in our heart. We want to Foster So, There's the test the evidence for seeing.

That the love that is coming out of us, is really this sacrificial. Love of Christ. Now, if that's the case, Then it helps us in our Assurance. It says my little children, let us not love and word or in tongue but indeed and in truth and by this, we know, Okay, so if our love is not just a word game that we are playing.

As part of the church Word and Tom, But if it is actually in truth from our heart, according to the test in verse 17 and then Indeed as well. Because if it's genuinely from the heart, it's going to control the actions against I. Oh, I have the love in my heart, just not in my hand.

But if we do have it indeed and in Truth by this, we shall know that we are of the truth. Which includes of course the necessary logical assumption. The only way you can come to love that way is by the truth. By being of the truth, because that's the test.

By this, we know that we are of the truth and shall assure our hearts before him. How great is this Assurance? Not only are we assured in our own mind. But even before God himself, we can come and say I have nothing to plead about Christ, but I have Christ to plead And what an amazing thing.

To be able to plead before God. To have his only begotten son, who did love us and give himself up for us. And now by faith has United himself to you. If you're a Believer, you're United to him and you have a shared life with him. And it is out of that Union and the communion that Fellowship that shared life with him that the love is coming out of you.

And that assures your heart even before God, Many of us tremble at having confidence before men, what are they going to think of us? But the True Believer. Can have confidence before God, what? God thinks of us. That is glorious. The True Believer. However may also lack confidence. And he knows that not every believer is going to have Assurance.

There's a difference between having saving faith and having Assurance of Actually. in God's Providence to us starting that part of That chapter of the confession. That's coming, Lord's Day in the Sabbath school. And he knows, not every believer has Assurance of faith. And so here, he's up, he says if you don't have a shorts of faith, Do not conclude then.

That you are lost that you are unsaved. Because, God is never in doubt. About those who are his so you keep clinging to Christ even if you don't feel like you are clicking to Christ, I mean, think, what's the response? What's the right? Wise response to if no, not knowing, if you are clinging to Christ, Is it?

Get depressed and dismayed about how unclinging to Christ you might be. Or is it to cling to him? So klingter. So he says for if our hearts if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things. So there's this wonderful Aside in verse 20, for those who lack Assurance, But all for those who have this Assurance, That God gives.

Beloved. If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And so loving others. Genuinely in a Christ-produced way in a union with Christ a produced way. As a help to Assurance of Faith, And then, of course, as the Earnest as the deposit down payment from God as it were, On all the other blessings, and So in addition to this assurance, whatever we ask, we receive from him.

And of course it's implied, whatever. We ask rightly wisely, according to his will. So, I gotta punish. If we are in Christ and receiving according to Christ for asking wrongly, But praise God, asking more and more rightly is also part of the work he does in us. How great and good are his gifts.

Whatever we ask we receive from him. Because we keep his Commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. So we know that he's the one who gave us to keep his Commandments weird. He is the one who gave us to do what is pleasing in his sight.

He is the one who has given us to love, not only in word and tongue, but deed in truth. Therefore, he's given us Christ and all these other things. Surely He is going to give us everything else that is in in Christ. And deserved by Christ, along with him.

So a little Romans 8, 32 logic here. In verses 22 and 23. And this is his Commandment that we should believe on the name of his son. Jesus Christ. Now, we know he gave us that And love one another. Just as he that as Christ gave us commandment. And we know that it is, he who gives us that And so, if he has given us believing, And if he has given us loving, Then he isn't going to give us everything else.

And so, it really is a sweet gift from God to be able to love one another. And therefore important for us. To Define biblically. What? Loving one, another And even to have this test of our heart response, in verse 17, So that we can examine the fruit and conclude that God really is doing this work in us.

And wherever we see lack and we will, You will see lacking. Look to him for more of it because he is the one who gives it. Amen, let's pray.

Thank you, Father for So, loving us that you gave your son. Thank you that as your son. He and you, and the spirit. Or one God from all eternity. And so that it is, It is with his Divine love that he has loved us. Both. According to his Divine will and according to his human will.

And we pray that your spirit would continue. Applying him to us giving us fellowship with him that comes out of our Union with him. So that we may love as he loves. And that we may have Assurance even before you. And that we Rejoice to know. That you who did not spare your own son but gave him up for us all Are also together with him freely.

Giving us all things. Give us that faith and that love. That hope we pray. In Jesus name, amen.