

## LESSONS ABOUT LOVE

### 1 John 3:11-17

As we continue our study in **John chapter three** we will discover John boldly setting forth truth about love, divine love. The kind of love a true child of God has in his heart and is expected to display in his life. (**Romans 5:5**)

It is my plan to consider what the writer has said to us in this passage as briefly as possible. In fact, by the time we get to the end of this chapter you may feel I haven't spent nearly enough time in my comments about anything John has written.

If you recall, at the beginning of this chapter we were introduced to the subject of love: divine love. It is a one of a kind of love which originated within the heart of God and becomes resident in the heart of a believer after conversion. In what follows in this chapter, we will learn how that love is to be lived out of our lives as believers especially as it relates to other believers.

To begin, in **verse 11** John reminds his readers: "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." The message he is referring to is found in **John 13:34**. There it reads: "A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." Jesus continues in **John 13:35** with: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Please note how this verse actually reads. It says "if you have love one *to* (emphasis mine) another" and *not* love for another. If we have love "to" someone or something, that kind of love will motivate us to do something for them. It actually assures that we will find ways of expressing the love we say we have. If, on the other hand, we only have love "for" someone or something, as this verse is most often quoted, the desire to express our professed love a person or thing will prove only to be an option and not a motivation.

In the words "we should love one another" of **verse 11** we find the positive principle of love. There is little doubt, at least in my mind, that in some parts of the Christian community this principle may be all too often missing. To be honest, as I have been reading and studying this I have been asking myself how I am doing with this! I'm sure I need some work in this area. You'll have to decide about how you are doing in this area.

Although John has already addressed this matter of loving the brother to some degree in **1 John 2:6-11**, here he considers the matter a little more deeply. But, before we do that, let's remember something he taught in that passage in **chapter two**. In the beginning of this epistle, we learned about fellowship. We learned how important it is to have and how to have it. There we learned loving the brethren in the right way was a matter of light and darkness. We learned it is more than a profession. In the passage before us, we are going to learn John takes this matter to a much deeper level and that loving the brethren is actually a matter of life and death.

As John digs deeper into the need to be sure we love the brethren and what that means, he does so, in part, by setting before us both the positive and negative principle of Love. He sets before us the positive principle of love in this verse and he will set forth the negative principle of love in **verse 12**. In **verse 12** we find how **not to love** our bothers and sisters of the household of faith. John says we are: "Not (to love) as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother." I'll be honest here. If the only kind of love you have for me is the Cain type of love, then please, don't love me! Notice the phrase in that verse: "who was of that wicked one." This is more than suggesting his actions and attitude originated with Satan. How can I say this? The Bible teaches the devil was a murderer (**John 8:44**) and so was Cain. Now we know Satan was not Cain's physical father, but from all indications he was his spiritual father, if you will.

Forgive me if what I am about to say is too plain for some of you. Do you know what the phrase "slew his brother" is actually suggesting? It suggests that when Cain slew Abel he did so by "cutting his throat." There could, and maybe should, be so much said about these two sons of Adam and Eve here, but time and the situation we are currently in doing out Bible study via Sermon Audio will not allow for such an exploration. For instance we could delve into how Eve must have reacted when she discovered the son she thought might be the deliverer promised by God her Creator was actually the first murderer. You can read the story of Cain and Abel starting with **Genesis 3:14–Genesis 4:16**.

**Verse 12** ends with a very insightful statement we would all be wise to consider carefully. It asks: "And wherefore slew he him? (speaking of Cain who slew Abel) Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." Please allow me to set forth a word of caution here! When we find jealousy manifesting its ugly self in our minds and hearts, we must be sensitive to its presence and realize that if it goes unchecked its natural course will produce envy which could be followed by murder.

In **verse 13** John says: “Marvel not (don’t be astonished, surprise), my brethren, if the world hate you.” In some degree, I believe those whom John was addressing, to some degree at least, already understood this fact. In fact, I can’t help but believe John had not already told his readers about the High Priestly prayer Jesus prayed for His own as recorded in the Gospel that bears his name. In fact, in **John 17:11, 14** we find our Lord praying this about His followers to His Heavenly Father and saying, although: “these are in the world”...“they are not of the world”

I believe John was saying we ought not be too surprised if the world hates us. After all, it hated Him! (**John 15:18**) As he continues he will tell us it is something altogether different when someone who claims to a part of God’s family hates another member of God’s family.

Listen to the message of **verse 14**: “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” What great news that is! In fact, this verse tells us there is one of the objective ways we can know whether or not the salvation we profess to possess is real or not. If someone is a true follower of Christ and in truth belongs to the family of God, then he will have a love for his brother in Christ!

May I quickly say I am thankful for *a know so salvation*? I’m glad I am saved and can know without a doubt I am: especially when I do not feel like I’m saved! I am glad God has provided us some testable and discernible indicators by which we as a believer in Christ may find assurance. This is just one indicator among the others we will discover in this great Epistle. I don’t know about you, but there have been times in my walk with the Lord when I battled the old enemy known as doubt.

But as John continues in this same verse, he does so by beginning a new sentence. He writes: “He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” Wow! There is that word “abideth” again. Remember, in **1 John** the words ending with the suffix “eth,” speak of a past act having continuing affect in the present. We have already seen in **1 John 2:9** that it does not matter what we say about where we are walking such as in the light. The truth of the matter is, if we hate a brother in Christ, we are in “darkness.” May I say it once again? The proof is in the pudding!

Expanding on this thought the Apostle continues as we read: “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” **verse 15**. Talk about a straight forward statement! This “son of thunder” has not lost his ability to speak truth when there is a need to do so. May I first say John is not saying a murderer cannot be saved. We have the personal testimony of

Paul the Apostle and the Biblical testimony about a man by the name of Moses to assure us God's grace is sufficient even for such a terrible sin as murder.

John is not speaking of physical murder here. What he is speaking of is spiritual murder. But, allow me to also say something important, a person who habitually hates another person possess the potential to actually commit physical murder of another person. The potential of becoming a manslayer is very real in a heart where the love of God does not exist! The truth of the matter is, if someone does not have the love of God in his heart then there is room for hate in his heart.

The amazing thing we find John saying here is a person like John just referred to **does not have eternal life abiding him!** Wow! I didn't say that, John did! Is it any wonder a wise man once said we should all "Keep (our) your heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life." **Proverbs 4:23**

To expand on this just little more I will borrow from Dr. Warren Wiersbe. I quote: "The issue here is not whether a murderer can become a Christian, but whether a man can continue being a murderer and still be a Christian. The answer is no. John says: "And ye know, no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."" Wiersbe goes on to say, and again I quote: "The murderer did not once have eternal life and then lose it; he never had eternal life at all." Wow! Sadly, I'm afraid he is correct.

One more thing before I move on. Hatred in the heart of any individual does more damage there than it does anywhere else. Even to the one that hatred is directed towards. This is the very sentiment Jesus expresses in **Matthew 5:21-26**.

The weighty truth of **verse 15** is followed by another that will, thankfully, lift us out of that dark place. **Verse 16** states: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." In all probability, all those reading this very personal and intimate family epistle understood that Jesus had willingly laid His life down for those who were sinners because of love. It was the love of God put on display at Calvary when Jesus Christ, the sinless one, died for the sinful ones. I imagine those reading this letter by John knew Jesus had died so they could live. What good news that is!

In light of this marvelous truth, John says the believer has an obligation to lay his life down for another believer in Christ.

I'm going to be man enough to say I need a lot of work here. How are you doing with this idea? Do you think it may be easier to die for someone on a battlefield in battle with an enemy on a piece of foreign soil than to put to death a part of our ego at home and allow a brother in Christ we may disagree with on some non-essential issue to have his way? I am made to think so! By the way, allowing another to have his way has never killed anyone. (Although someone may feel like they will die in doing so.) Sad to say, but I'm afraid many a saintly person has been viciously murdered by another person professing to a brother in Christ who's heart was full of jealousy, envy, and murder instead of the love of God.

**Verse 17** continues with a probing question: "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love God in him?" When we are unaware of a need of another, we can do nothing about what we do not know about, and are, therefore, innocent in our inaction. On the other hand, if we learn of a genuine need and do nothing to alleviate or provide for that need, then there is a problem. Remember what James said in **James 2:17**? He said: "...faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone." (read **James 2:14-20**)

The question posed here by John seems to demand a negative answer? John asks: "how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Apparently, it does not. The verse asks how someone can say they love someone in need while at the same time he "shutteth up his bowels (a reference to the heart or the place of emotion) of compassion towards him" while continuing to profess to have the love of God resident in his heart. It is impossible John says! In fact, we will learn the kind of love placed in the heart of a believer that comes from God, as its source, is both practical and practiced. In other words, it is manifest in both deeds and actions and not just words. John will say more about this later in his epistle.

The truths presented to us here by John are nothing less than amazing and somewhat challenging to most, if not all, of us. As I said in the beginning of this lesson they really deserve more time than I have given them here, yet I believe enough has been said to convey their message and provoke all of us who are either reading or listening (or both) to this Bible study, to do a personal examination as to how we are measuring up to John's teaching.

Some people would think this beloved Apostle would be mild and meek in his exhortations and his message. But, we find him powerful in his exhortation, pointed in his message, and plain in setting before us those things by which the members of the family of God may prosper and be blessed.

Being a part of God's family is an amazing privilege! But, as we have learned and will continue to learn, it is a privilege that comes with great responsibility.

Living in light and the hope of the return of Christ is motivation enough for all of God's children to do whatever necessary to insure they will not be "ashamed" at His coming. (**1 John 2:18**)

I don't want to be and I'm sure you don't either...so, by the grace of God, let's do what we need to do in order to make sure we won't be!

Tom Price, 20202