

**I JOHN 3**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to I John chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

As we have seen in our previous studies of I John, the first two chapters dealt with –

***THE LIGHT OF GOD!***

And the thrust of this was seen in I John 1:5 where we are told, **“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.”**

Think of it like this. If we know God, if we are abiding in Christ, then we should be walking in the light as He is in the light. Our actions should match up with our profession of faith or our walk should match up with our talk!

In our study tonight and continuing next time, we will be in the second division of this letter and that deals with - ***THE LOVE OF GOD!***

We will cover this in I John chapters 3 and 4.

And we will conclude with I John chapter 5 – ***THE LIFE OF GOD!***

But what we will be looking at next is so important. You see, not only is God pure and holy, not only is God light, but His love for us is so rich and so deep.

And it is that sacrificial love, that unconditional love that can only come from God.

Now, in saying that, as children of God, John wants us to love as God loves.

Now we are right to say, ***“That is impossible!”***

And that is true if we try to do that on our own, but God never tells us to do it on our own. He tells us how to live and then He gives us the power to live that way, but it is still a choice we must make.

Also, we are going to see a contrast between true Christians and the pretenders, those who say they claim Christ and yet their lives, how they live and what they say that they believe is way off.

Warren Wiersbe put it like this. He wrote,

The United States Treasury Department has a special group of men whose job it is to track down counterfeiters. Naturally, these men need to know a counterfeit bill when they see it.

How do they learn to identify fake bills?

Oddly enough, they are not trained by spending hours examining counterfeit money. Rather, they study the real thing. They become so familiar with authentic bills that they can spot a counterfeit by looking at it or, often, simply by feeling it.

This is the approach in 1 John 3, which warns us that in today's world there are counterfeit Christians - "children of the devil" (1 John 3:10).

But instead of listing the evil characteristics of Satan's children, the Scripture gives us a clear description of God's children. The contrast between the two is obvious.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 983

And, once again, it is putting into practice what God desires in our life. Not just correct doctrine, but living what we say we believe, or as John puts it, "**My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.**" I John 3:18.

In other words, don't just talk the talk, but walk the walk, live what you say you believe!

And listen to what John says before he moves on, before we start I John 3:1. John put it like this in I John 2:28-29, **“And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.”**

And it is out of that we will pick up our study here in I John chapter 3, beginning in verse 1, and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

### **I JOHN 3**

#### **VERSE 1**

Let’s think about this for a minute. How many times have we read through this verse and that is about all we do with it?

Let me share with you how The Amplified Bible puts this verse. It reads, **“SEE WHAT [an incredible] quality of love the Father has given (shown, bestowed on) us, that we should [be permitted to] be named and called and counted the children of God! And so we are! The reason that the world does not know (recognize, acknowledge) us is that it does not know (recognize, acknowledge) Him.”** I John 3:1.

Let that sink in for a minute. Of all the people of this world, God chose you, He chose me to be His children, that is love! And that love is extended to all, but they must receive it by faith!

And John says **“Behold”** or **“Look at”** God’s love towards us because He didn’t just look down upon us with pity, but He became flesh, dwelt among us, paid for our sins on the cross of Calvary, endured the wrath of God that was due us, so that we could be saved and become the children of God! You see, His love is seen in His action!

It is as John said in John 1:12-13, **“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”**

What love that is!

John again put it like this in I John 4:19, **“We love Him because He first loved us.”**

That truly is amazing, at least for me because I know what kind of person I am, and God still loved me and gave Himself for me so that I may live with Him and become a child of God!

I like the perspective that Spurgeon gives to us on this. He wrote, *“‘There,’ he says, ‘you poor people that love Me you sick people, you unknown, obscure people, without any talent, I have published it before heaven and earth, and made the angels know it, that you are My children, and I am not ashamed of you. I glory in that fact that I have taken you for My sons and daughters.’”*

How awesome is God’s love for us!

Listen carefully about this love of God for us, because I think many times we picture God as Santa Clause. What do I mean by that? I mean that *“He’s making a list, He’s checking it twice, He’s gonna find out who’s naughty or nice . . .”*

Please understand if God’s love for us is based upon our goodness, God would not love any of us, none of us!

One writer explained it like this. He wrote,

This love, John says, “has [been] given to us, that we should be called children of God.”

The meaning of this verb coupled with the tense John uses suggests that this gift cannot be earned, bought, or withdrawn. This is not a love that you and I deserve. This love is a gift.

- David L. Allen, 1-3 John – Fellowship in God’s Family, p. 137

And please understand that John is not speaking universally of all mankind being the children of God, but exclusively of those who have received Jesus as their Savior.

Remember what we read in John 1:12, **“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.”**

Now when John says that the world doesn't know us, he is not saying that they are unaware of us.

What he is saying is that they don't have that intimate relationship with us because they don't have an intimate relationship with Jesus. In other words, light and darkness don't mix just like oil and water!

You see, as the world looks at us, they just don't get us.

Jesus gave us this warning in John 15:18-21, **“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet 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. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.”**

What I find interesting today is the church is trying to befriend the world, and that is a dangerous thing to do.

Why is that dangerous?

Because the world will not compromise what it believes and thus, they want us to compromise what we believe, and it has had devastating effects upon the church!

Also, James 4:4 gives us this warning, **“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”**

Yes, we are to love sinners, but understand that for the most part, they will not love us as they did not love the Lord!

We are not to show them how much we are like them, like the world, but how much we are like our Father in heaven, and they often won't like that because we are not condoning their sin but exposing it!

Now, in knowing how much God loves us, how does that affect our life?

And this is important. You see, to function well as a Christian, we have to know who we are in Christ, be in the Word of God. And out of that, no matter what problems we are facing, no matter what comes our way, we are His child, and our actions should reflect that, not for salvation, but for our identification with Him!

Listen to what John says next.

### VERSES 2-3

Maybe some of you have been thinking, ***“I can't wait to be a child of God, but I am not just good enough, not yet. But one day I will be a child of God when I meet this standard.”***

That is not right, you will never be good enough and, remember what we just read. God's love for us is not based upon our goodness, but His goodness!

And if you look here at I John 3:2, John doesn't say that one day we will be children of God, we are already children of God, we have been adopted into the family of God by the new birth, by receiving Jesus as our Lord and Savior!

But that does not mean that God is done with us, we are not perfect, not even close.

God is still molding and shaping our lives down here so that one day we will fit in up there – it is a lifelong process that will be completed when we go to be with Jesus.

Paul made that point in Philippians 3:20-21 when he said, **“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”**

We are a work in progress!

I think Stott rightly wrote, *“What we are does not now appear to the world; what we shall be does not yet appear to us.”* That just makes sense!

Paul, in I Corinthians 13:12 makes this interesting point. He says, **“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.”**

In the ancient world mirrors were made out of polished metal and thus, the image was not clear, it was distorted.

Paul is telling us that we can’t see Jesus clearly now, but one day, face-to-face, we shall see Him perfectly clear!

Here is the point. To the extent you see Jesus now, you will be like Him but one day, as you see Him, His sinless nature will flow from your life as you go to be with Him. These bodies of flesh will be changed!

Now let me be clear on this. When John says that **“we shall be like Him”** he is not saying that we will be God, not even close!

There is a Greek word that does describe equality in number, size, weight. That is not the word that John uses here. If he did, then we would be God, but we are not!

The Greek word that John uses here speaks of being like Him, His nature flowing from our lives, something that the flesh nature tries to stop from happening in this life but when we get our new bodies, that flesh nature will be done away with. We will have a glorified body like His. Hopefully that clears that up, we are not God nor are we becoming God!

And listen again to what John says in I John 3:3, **“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”**

I think one of the reasons that Christians are having such a hard time living holy lives is that they don't know what time it is!

People today have lost the hope of Christ's return but folks, we need to keep that before us at all times! Why is that?

Because it helps us to walk in a worthy manner, in purity knowing He can return at any moment, any day!

Paul said it this way in Titus 2:11-15, **“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.”**

Thus, live every day as if He is coming back because our only hope is in Him and not this world!

And John is going to continue on speaking of how we are to walk, what we should be looking like or what the world should see manifested in our lives!

#### VERSE 4

When you read through the New Testament, did the writers have a problem talking about sin?

Absolutely not. They spoke of sin like it is, deadly, displeasing to God and yet today, look at the number of churches and pastor's that refuse to deal with sin and it has affected the lives of their people.

They don't want to hurt their fragile self-esteem, so they side-step it! And thus, compromise leads to unholy living!

Remember what Paul wrote in Galatians 1:10, "**For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.**"

Who are you trying to please, men or God? That is an important question because what you say, how you live out your Christian life will give you the answer!

For John, he defines sin at its most basic root. It is a disregard for the Law of God, which is inherently a disregard for the *Law Maker*, God Himself!

Thus, sin must not be taken lightly, justified, ignored as these false teachers of John's day were doing and as many are doing today!

Sin is missing the mark of perfection; it is going against God Himself and John says that sin is "**lawlessness**" or "**wickedness.**"

That word “**commits**” in the Greek is in the present perfect tense, which speaks of a continual action.

In other words, if sin is the pattern of your life, then you are living in rebellion against God! That is important for us to understand or we will condemn ourselves everyday!

#### VERSES 5-6

The Bible tells us that in Christ all our sins are cast as far as the east is from the west to be remembered no more. (Psalm 103:12, Isaiah 43:25)

The blood of Christ has cleansed us as white as snow in a positional sense.

Paul put it this way in II Corinthians 5:21, “**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**”

That again is love!

Now you read this, “**. . . Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor knows Him**” and you can be very discouraged and just throw your hands up in the air and say, “*What is the use. I sin and thus, I guess I am not saved, that is what John is saying!*”

This is so important. We need to understand what the text is saying before we make a doctrine out of it!

I think it is clear here and I will show you why, and I have touched on this already, that John is speaking of those who live in habitual sin.

You see, if you can sin with no conviction of God upon your life, if you look forward to sinning, then John says that you really haven’t seen God, you don’t know Him and the reality is, He doesn’t know you as a child of God!

“It is very important to understand what the Bible means - and what it does not mean - when it says **does not sin**. According to the verb tense John uses, **does not sin** means does not live a lifestyle of habitual sin. John has already told us in 1 John 1:8 – ***“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”*** In 1 John 1:8, the grammar indicates John is speaking about *occasional* acts of sin. The grammar of 1 John 3:6 indicates that John is speaking of a settled, continued *lifestyle* of sin. John is not teaching here the possibility of sinless perfection.”

In fact, Stott put it like this, ***“The present tense in the Greek verb implied habit, continuity, unbroken sequence.”***

The Amplified Bible makes this point very clear as it says, **“No one who abides in Him [who lives and remains in communion with and in obedience to Him - deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] commits (practices) sin. No one who [habitually] sins has either seen or known Him [recognized, perceived, or understood Him, or has had an experiential acquaintance with Him].”**

Now, why doesn't John tell us how much sin will get us in trouble, what is the line we need to stay away from?

Because if that is your passion, how close to the edge you can walk and still be saved, then you are not saved in the first place, you are fooling yourself!

The Gnostics believed you could sin all you wanted because the body was evil, but the spirit was good, and John says, ***“NOT!”***

Sin is sin, it is missing the mark of perfection. You don't play with sin; you flee from it!

You don't build up the flesh, but you crucify it!

We need to abide in God and not in sin. We need to hate sin as God hates sin!

And again, keep in mind the false teaching that John is coming against, the Gnostics and like I said, they believed you can sin all you want because the flesh does not matter, and John is saying it does matter!

### VERSES 7-9

John is warning them not to be deceived by these false teachers.

Yes, we have appropriated the righteousness of Christ into our lives by faith, but that religious or spiritual righteousness cannot be separated from living a righteous life!

And, apparently, there were those who taught that you could be righteous before God with no evidence of righteousness in your life. And make no mistake about it, John is rebuking this idea.

I like the way that Spurgeon summed this up, he nails it for us. He wrote, *“The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul.”* Absolutely. A saved life is a changed life! And please understand that I did not say a perfect life, but a changed life that is growing, maturing in the Lord.

You see, we have the resources we need to live a righteous life before God!

Paul put it this way in Ephesians 4:22-24, **“if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”**

This was a problem in John's day, and it continues to be a problem in our day. Think about this for a minute. There are people today that consider themselves Christians but who are actively practicing the homosexual lifestyle. And John says they are deceiving themselves.

There are people who attend churches that are more concerned about their "*felt needs*" than in teaching them to obey God's Word and holding them accountable when they violate what God has commanded. And when you look at it, they are basically giving them a "*license*" to sin.

But Jesus has come, and He has set us free from the bondage that sin had us in. And, according to I John 3:5, Jesus came to take away our sins and now John tells us Jesus came that He might destroy the works of the Devil!

Don't make a peace treaty with sin, sin must be destroyed!

Would you make a peace treaty with Al-Qaeda or some terrorist group? Of course not, and thus, don't make a peace treaty with sin that is even worse!

You see, sin should no longer have us in bondage like it once did because God has set us free.

Paul said in Romans 6:6, "**knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.**"

It is not that we don't sin, but we are not involved in habitual sin without any conviction.

You see, there are only two families here, a child of God or a child of the Devil, which one are you? And we will see that as we read on here in I John 3:10.

And like I have said, God has given to us the ability to have victory over sin.

How can we obtain that victory?

I think there are three ways:

*By the power of the Holy Spirit opening up the Word of God to our lives.*

*By fleeing those lustful desires, not to entertain them.*

*By being in fellowship with the brethren, which will help keep you accountable.*

#### VERSE 10

Is John being unloving here or judgmental?

Not at all, this is the reality, what you are manifesting in your life will show if you are a child of God or a child of the Devil!

How do we know or identify who is who?

Sometimes it is difficult but if you are living rightly before God, if you love people, then you are a child of God, if not, then you are a child of the Devil.

You see, righteousness without love makes one to be a religious Pharisee, and love without righteousness makes one a partner with the Devil!

Jesus was righteous and He was loving, and He is telling us to walk accordingly. Not that we are perfect, that we never get mad at people, that we never do anything wrong, but when we do, do we hate it? You see, that truly shows where your heart is at!

And John is going to continue on speaking about this love.

VERSE 11

In I John 2:7-8 John told us, **“Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.”**

This is not a new command, but an old one that has been refreshed in Christ.

Thus, what John is saying to us here in I John 3:11 is this. “That message you first heard when you got saved, that is the heart of what it means to be a child of God, to have that *AGAPE* love towards people!”

Jesus put it like this in John 13:34-35, **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

If you don’t have that love for people, if that love has grown cold, then you need to repent and get right with God, return to Him, because this love is what shows we are a disciple of Jesus Christ!

This is the heart of God, it is important to Him and it should be important to us, *HIS LOVE!*

And as we read on here, we are going to see John give to us an example of what a loveless life looks like, how it is manifested in their life.

VERSE 12

Here we see John give us the example of Cain to show how destructive hatred is and it is just a reflection of your heart.

Cain was not right before God, his works were evil, which lead to hatred.

We are told that both Cain and his brother Abel came to sacrifice to the Lord. Abel offered to God a lamb while Cain offered the fruit of the land. God accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's, why?

Some say it was that Abel offered a blood sacrifice while Cain offered a grain, and that might be, but I don't think that is the point here.

I think this is more an issue of the heart that was then manifested in his actions.

In Hebrews 11:4 we are told, **“By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.”**

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, **“[Prompted, actuated] by faith Abel brought God a better and more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, because of which it was testified of him that he was righteous [that he was upright and in right standing with God], and God bore witness by accepting and acknowledging his gifts. And though he died, yet [through the incident] he is still speaking. [Gen 4:3-10.]”**

Thus, hatred and jealousy led Cain to kill his brother. What was in his heart was then manifested in his actions.

His rebellion against God led to his hatred towards his fellow man, his own brother!

May we be wise and allow the love of God to not only flow into our lives but through our lives!

If we don't, if our hearts are hard and cold towards others, then what is manifested in our lives is not of God, but you are listening to the Devil!

John is now going to apply this to our lives as we read on. He told us about Cain and now the application for us!

### VERSES 13-15

First of all, John starts out speaking of the world hating us.

Why does the world hate us?

Because, just as Cain hated his brother because Abel's righteousness exposed Cain's sin, so too does our righteous living, our love, the light of God shining through us expose their sin and they don't like it and they try to silence it, put it out.

Jesus put it this way in John 3:19-21, "**And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.**"

Thus, don't be surprised when the world hates you!

Then John tells us that a love for people is a sign of being born again and if that love is missing, the salvation of that person is in question.

You see, hatred towards others is, in a sense, spiritual murder.

We don't tend to think of it that way, but Jesus said in Matthew 5:21-22, "**You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.**"

The point that Jesus is making is that you can let anger grow inside of you so much that it can land you in Hell! Not a good thing and that is the warning that Jesus is giving them and us today!

You see, it is not only physical murder that is wrong, but verbal also, it is a matter of the heart and if you are not right with God, then it will be reflected in how you treat others and God takes this seriously!

Also, Solomon tells us in Proverbs 18:21, "**Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.**"

Spurgeon wrote, "Do you love them for Christ's sake? Do you say to yourself, 'That is one of Christ's people; that is one who bears Christ's cross; that is one of the children of God; therefore I love him, and take delight in his company'? Then, that is an evidence that you are not of the world."

And Warren Wiersbe put it like this, to sum this up for us. He wrote,

At this point, you are probably thinking, "But I have never murdered anyone!" And to this statement, God replies, "Yes, but remember that to a Christian hatred is the same as murder" (1 John 3:15; (cf. Matt 5:22). The only difference between Level 1 and Level 2 is the outward act of taking life. The inward intent is the same.

A visitor at the zoo was chatting with the keeper of the lion house.

“I have a cat at home,” said the visitor, “and your lions act just like my cat. Look at them sleeping so peacefully! It seems a shame that you have to put those beautiful creatures behind bars.”

“My friend,” the keeper laughed, “these may look like your cat, but their disposition is radically different. There’s murder in their hearts. You’d better be glad the bars are there.”

The only reason some people have never actually murdered anyone is because of the “bars” that have been put up: the fear of arrest and shame, the penalties of the law, and the possibility of death, But we are going to be judged by “the law of liberty” (James 2:12).

The question is not so much, “What did you do?” but “What did you want to do? What would you have done if you had been at liberty to do as you pleased?” This is why Jesus equates hatred with murder (Matt 5:21-26) and lust with adultery (Matt 5:27-30).

This does not mean, of course, that hatred in the heart does the same amount of damage, or involves the same degree of guilt, as actual murder. Your neighbor would rather you hate him than kill him!

But in God’s sight, hatred is the moral equivalent of murder, and if left unbridled it leads to murder. A Christian has passed from death to life (John 5:24), and the proof of this is that he loves the brethren. When he belonged to the world system, he hated God’s people; but now that he belongs to God, he loves them.

VERSE 16

This should just make sense to us and yet, we don't listen to what God is saying.

People want to know what true love really is and thus, they look to Hollywood, they look to the tabloids, they look to social media, they look at the movies and television, they look at books, and because of that, many have a distorted look of what true love is all about!

Hear me out on this. If you want to know what love is all about, look to Jesus because He is the example, the standard for what true love is all about!

The problem again is we don't look to the Lord and we get all messed up.

The Greeks had a few different words for love, let me show you what I mean.

There is the Greek word ***EROS***, and this is an erotic love, sexual love. There is nothing wrong with this unless this is all there is, and this is the love that Hollywood gives to us!

Then there is ***STORGE***, and this love is more of a family love, like between a parent and a child or between family members. Again, nothing wrong with this love, but this is not the love that the Lord expects from us.

There is ***PHILEO***, and we get our English word Philadelphia or the city of brotherly love. It is the love of deep friendship and please understand, this kind of love is the highest, the deepest love that man can achieve apart from God empowering us to go even farther, which brings us to the last word.

The fourth Greek word for love is ***AGAPE***, and this is a love from God. It gives and gives and gives and does not expect anything in return. This love is not based upon the other person deserving it, and many times they don't, but it is based upon the love that God has shown us and now He wants us to show that love to others.

Again, this is a supernatural love that gives to others because we love them, not to love them in order to get something from them!

And the world is searching for all kinds of love except the best love, *AGAPE* love! Let me show you what I mean. David Scott Crother died of AIDS in early 1993, but not before he infected his unnamed partner, who pressed charges against Crother.

The woman said in an interview: “This is not an assault. It is murder . . . All I wanted is someone to love me, and now I’m going to die for that. I don’t think I should have to die for that.” This man knowing passed on this deadly virus to his partner, with no concern for what would happen to her. It was only about him!

Make no mistake about it, we all have that craving for love, but we look for it in the wrong ways and in the wrong places.

And as you look at the life of Jesus, we know what this *AGAPE* love is all about because Jesus gives to us His example and then empowers us to live accordingly!

You see, John tells us that true love is seen in how we sacrifice our lives for others, that we are willing to die for them.

Love is not a feeling it is an act of your will, it is seen in action, the things you do for others!

Paul put it this way in Romans 5:8, “**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**”

Now most of us will never be in a situation where we have to sacrifice our lives so another could live but are we even willing to give of our time, our energy, our resources to help others?

You look at most churches and a few people run them because the others are not willing to make that sacrifice, but what if no one was? Some feel that because I am the pastor, I should do everything, that is not Scriptural even though I have no problem working and I do work.

But my primary focus is the study of God's Word and prayer and I am to teach you the things of God so you may go out and do the work of the ministry!

I am blessed here because so many of you are involved in the work, but some of you are not and you need to pray about it because there are no spectators in God's kingdom!

As John said, **“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.”** I John 3:16.

#### VERSES 17-18

John just spoke of sacrificial love, how we are to lay down our lives for the brethren, and now he applies that to our life. You see, you can talk all you want about loving the brethren, but if that love is not demonstrated by your actions, it is empty.

James tells us, **“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”**

Also, in James 2:14-18 he tells us, **“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”**

In other words, how clearly do your actions show that you really love the brethren?

And please understand that we can't help everyone, but I think the idea here is that we can help those who God brings across our path and the people He puts upon our heart!

Clarke puts it like this. He tells us, ***“Here is a test of this love; if we do not divide our bread with the hungry, we certainly would not lay down our life for him. Whatever love we may pretend to mankind, if we are not charitable and benevolent, we give the lie to our profession.”***

In other words, talk is cheap, thus, may your walk line up with your talk or your profession of faith is manifested in the practice of your faith!

We see an example of those who care and those who don't in Luke chapter 10, the parable of the Good Samaritan.

You know the story. A man left Jerusalem heading for Jericho, and on his way, he was beaten up and robbed and left for dead on the road by these thieves.

As a priest was walking by, he saw the man and not wanting to get involved, in not wanting to defile himself, he crossed over to the other side, ignoring this man.

Then came a Levite and he too looked at this man in need and instead of helping him he did like the priest and ignored this man that was dying.

Then came this Samaritan man, and the Jews hated the Samaritans because they saw them as half-breeds, half Jew and half Gentile.

And yet this man cared for this man in need, took care of his wounds, brought him to an inn and told the inn keeper to care for him, gave him some money and said if more was needed when he returned, he would pay the inn keeper, he will take care of it.

And Jesus said to the Jewish religious leaders in Luke 10:36-37, **“So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?’ And he said, ‘He who showed mercy on him.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.”**

You see, are you willing to step up, to get involved at your own risk, even though it may cost you something? Jesus wants us to!

Do we see that kind of indifference towards people today?

You bet we do, the love of many has grown cold!

Case in point, the man who died on Mount Everest as others passed him by.

This was a well-traveled route to the summit where a British mountaineer became deprived of oxygen and collapsed.

We are told, “Dozens of people walked right past him, unwilling to risk their own ascents. Within hours, David Sharp, 34, was dead.”

Over 40 people passed him by without doing anything to rescue him because they wanted to make it to the top of Mount Everest!

How can this be?

The story concludes by saying, “But many of today’s Everest climbers are on commercial expeditions, some paying tens of thousands of dollars to guides who are under fierce pressure to get their clients to the summit.”

The love of many has grown cold!

May our love not grow cold, may our hearts not become hardened towards God and towards people, and as John said, **“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”** I John 3:18.

VERSES 19-21

John is saying that if we see this kind of love in our lives then we can have confidence, we can have the assurance that we are in the truth, that we are saved.

How can I be so sure that I am saved?

Because the blood of Christ cleanses us from all our sin, the love of God is poured out into our lives and then that love is manifested in the things we do towards others, the love we show them!

But here is the problem. For some Christians, they live a life of condemnation. They are beaten up, they don't have that assurance, why is that?

Because they are basing their relationship with God on feelings and that can be dangerous. They are listening to the Devil who is condemning them!

And think about how high we see the bar and when we don't reach that we feel like a failure. And that is nothing more than extreme legalism where you have to live up to a certain standard or you are lost today, maybe saved tomorrow, but again, lost the next day, and you can never attain that kind of righteousness and you condemn yourself!

I am not saying we ignore sin, we deal with it, but understand that God is greater, and He saved us by His shed blood, not by our righteousness.

And if you are still unsure, Paul tells us in Romans 8:1, "**There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**"

Do you believe that?

You need to because it is the truth!

But the Devil comes in and tries to condemn us and when he does, it pushes us away from God and thus, you know that condemnation is not of God.

God will convict us of our sin, He will chasten us with the idea that we would draw closer to Him.

Thus, who are you listening to?

You see, God knows all things, let His Word set you free from that condemnation!

I like the way that Spurgeon put it. He wrote, ***“Sometimes our heart condemns us, but, in doing so, it gives us a wrong verdict, and then we have the satisfaction of being able to take the case into a higher court, for ‘God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.’”***

Thank you Lord for your grace and mercy You bestow upon me!

#### VERSE 22

As you walk in the light as He is in the light, as you walk in obedience and love, you will experience answered prayer.

Now please understand that this is not based on your obedience, but out of fellowship with God, which calls you to be obedient and full of His love.

In other words, your prayers will be in line with His heart and if they are not, He will redirect you.

It is as Jesus said in John 15:7, **“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”**

And in I John 5:14-15 we are told, **“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.”**

VERSES 23-24

So is John saying we have to keep the commandments of God to be saved? We saw that in I John 3:22, “**... we keep His commandments ...**”

That is discouraging because the Jews had 613 commandments of God to follow, 365 were negative, “***Thou shall not ...***” and 248 positive ones, “***Thou shall ...***”

That is not what John is saying here. He is telling us that we need to love Jesus, not forcing us to be saved, but if we want to be saved then we need to follow what God has said in regard to salvation.

We can't be saved anyway we want is the key and that fits in with what John is going to be speaking about in chapter 4 of I John, testing the spirits or testing these false teachers to see if what they are saying about Jesus is right or wrong!

As I begin to close this evening, I don't want you to leave here thinking that God is watching you and as soon as you step out of line, He is going to get you! That is the Law, that is legalism, and you will feel condemned!

Let me show you what I mean with this story.

William is a pastor's son who, at the time of this story, was about 7 years old.

It seems that William was a rambunctious little boy who often pushed the patience of his teachers.

One Sunday while driving home from church William, who was unusually quiet, suddenly blurted out, “***Dad, is God watching me?***”

William's father knew something was behind that question and so he asked, “***Why do you ask me that William, did someone tell you God is watching you?***”

William responded in a sheepish tone, *“My Sunday school teacher told me God is watching me - is it true dad? Is God really watching me?”*

William’s father probed deeper, *“Why did your Sunday school teacher tell you God is watching you William?”*

*“Well, because, I was kinda acting up in class - but is it true dad? Is God watching me?”*

Now this pastor knew that the way he answered that question had the potential to shape William’s concept of God for many years to come.

So, he prayed quickly for wisdom and then said to his son, *“Yes William it’s true, God is watching you - He’s watching you because He loves you so much He can’t take His eyes off of you!”*

Please understand that truth. God is watching over you so much because He loves you so much! He just can’t take His eyes off of you!

And because of that love that He extends to us, we need to love others with that kind of love! Not watching for them to fail, but watching them and blessing them because you love them!

You see, if Jesus is living in you, what is the evidence to prove it?

I believe that Paul answers that for us in Galatians 5:22-26 as he says, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”**

You see, the fruit of the Spirit is *AGAPE* love that is manifested in many different ways!

Thus, “**And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.**” I John 3:19.

How awesome is our God towards us! His love is amazing!