

**TITLE:** A CHILD OF GOD LOVES THE CHILDREN OF GOD

**TEXT:** 1 JOHN 3:11-24

**INTRO:** When questioned by God about Abel, Cain replied, *Am I my brother's keeper?* This was rhetorical; no answer was expected. The answer is understood – "No!" But what's God's answer? **1 John 3:10**–the one who doesn't do righteous & love his brother is a child of the devil! But what does "love" mean? Can I just say "I love you" every now & then?

**I. THE COMMAND TO LOVE (v. 11-15):**

**A. Reaction to brotherly love (v. 11-13)**

**(v. 11) For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.**

1. The message – **love one another!** The Greek ("agape" love) means "to love, in a social or moral sense" (Strong). It might be best defined when compared to phileo love, which Strongs defines as "to be a friend to (fond of), have affection for, as a matter of sentiment or feeling; while agapao is wider, embracing especially the judgment & the *deliberate* assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty, & propriety." He goes on to say that phileo is a love of the heart, where agape is a love of the head. Phileo love is based more on a personal relationship (brotherly love); agapao love is based more on a personal decision. It could be described as agape being wider & phileo being deeper (more personal).
2. Agapao love seeks the best interest of another, regardless of whether or not you know him! "This is the message"– seek one another's best interest, as a personal decision, even when it doesn't come naturally "as a matter of sentiment or feeling."
  - We do this by bearing one another's burdens (**Gal 6:2**), forgiving & forbearing one another (**Col 3:13**), comforting the feeble-minded & supporting the weak (**1 Thess 5:14**), teaching (**Eph 4:15**), & also by restoring an erring brother (**Jam 5:19-20**), which requires discipline. All these things are included in the love that John is commanding here.
3. You've heard this message from the beginning – the beginning of what?
  - a. In **2:7-8** he called it "*an old commandment which ye had from the beginning*" & "*a new commandment.*" It's old in the sense that it was commanded long before Christianity (**Lev 19:18**). It's new in Christianity because of the newness Christ brought to it (not new in respect to time, but quality/freshness –Strong)– **John 13:34**– "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*" (More in **v. 16-18**.)
  - b. So "beginning" can mean the beginning of Christianity or the beginning of time & the expectation God has *always* had of His people (**v. 12**–it may be the latter based on his reference to Cain as an example of *disobedience* to the command).

**(v. 12) Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.**

1. **Cain the bad example:** We see in this verse how *not* to love your brother – like Cain. We see this from Cain's perspective (**Gen 4**), how he treated his brother, and his lack of concern for him in asking "am I my brother's keeper." We've already seen from **Gal 6:2** how Paul helped answer this question: "*bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.*"
  - Cain was of (out of; source) the wicked one (a child of the devil–see **v.10**). This is not specifically because he killed his brother, but because he sinned (*any sin*–**v. 8**) – because he didn't do righteousness & love his brother (**v. 10**).
2. **Abel the persecuted:** We also see something in this verse from Abel's perspective: Cain killed him for two reasons: Abel's works were righteous, and his own were evil. An evil man doesn't usually kill another evil man simply because that man's works are evil. If God had refused to accept Abel's sacrifice too, Cain would've gotten along with him just fine (what reason would he have had then to kill him?)! But God accepted Abel's offering (which had *nothing* to do with Cain's). This murder was the result of envy & jealousy! Why mention this here? See **v. 13**.

**(v. 13) Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.**

1. Don't be amazed or surprised if the world hates you – even like Cain hated Abel. They were brothers, but John says "the world." If a righteous man is killed by his own brother because of righteousness, certainly he should expect the same from the world. With all the NT warnings of persecution, this should NEVER be a surprise to a Christian (e.g., **1 Pet 4:12**–"*think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you...*"). John is telling Christians to expect it & be prepared for it.
2. But in spite of this persecution, Peter says in **1 Pet 3:13-14**, "*and who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good? But even if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye, & be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.*"

**B. Reasons for brotherly love (v. 14-15)**

**(v. 14) We...have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.**

1. *We've passed from death to life* – obviously *spiritual* death. **1)** We were spiritually dead (in sin), but are now spiritually alive in Christ's body (His church). **2)** We had ultimate spiritual death to look forward to before, but now eternal life! Why? This can be answered in more than one way (e.g., we've obeyed the gospel, we remain faithful, etc.). But contextually...
2. *Because we love the brethren* –so I'm saved simply because I tell you "I love you"? Remember the definition of agape!
3. The logical conclusion is that "*he who doesn't love his brother abideth in death*" – he hasn't passed to life; he's still spiritually dead! John is talking to Christians (so this is another verse that refutes O.S.A.S.)! A Christian who doesn't love his brethren is sinning! He is therefore not abiding in Him, he is not born of Him, he doesn't know Him, & he isn't walking in the light! AND, he's a murderer (**v. 15**)!

**(v. 15) Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.**

1. Whoever *hates* his brother... There's no middle ground: *love or loveth not* (**v.14**); then *loveth not* (**v.14**) = *hateth* (**v.15**).
2. A murderer! How can he say this? **1)** This is the example he gave of Cain. **2)** As Jesus taught in **Mt 5:21-22**, murder starts in the heart. **3)** Which is worse...to kill like Cain, or to be unconcerned about a brother's (or anyone's) *spiritual* wellbeing? In the context, to hate is to not love! If you don't care about helping your brother (physically or spiritually), you hate him!
3. You **know** a murderer isn't saved; you **know** Cain was lost! So apply this fact to yourself if you don't love others!

**CONCLUSION:** This is pretty strong language. You can't read this letter & think Christianity is an easy religion where God accepts you "as long as your heart is right." It requires your love. And this kind of love isn't limited to within the church; this just happens to be his topic. Remember that they'll know us by our love (**John 13:35**).

**INTRO:** God said He *thoroughly* furnished us for every good work in the Scriptures. He did this by not only giving us commands, but by giving us positive *examples* of how those commands were obeyed, as well as negative examples of how they were *disobeyed*. In v. 11-15 He gave us the command to love your brother, then gave a negative example (Cain) - a pretty extreme example (murder). Next He gives us the positive example – the *ultimate* example of love that we must follow.

## II. THE PATTERN OF LOVE (v. 16-18):

**A. The Example of Love (v. 16):** *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: & we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.* Cf. **John 3:16** – “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son....”

1. The example given
  - a. In (by) this we have known (perfect tense–“have known & still know”) the love of God. “*Of God*” is not found in many manuscripts. So we can read it “By this we have known & still know love” (in a general sense).
  - b. What love? Just smiling & saying “I love you”? No! This is the same love we discussed in **v. 11**. It’s that agape love that seeks the best interest of everyone, & in the context of brethren, causes us to bear each other’s burdens, forbear & forgive one another, strengthen, comfort, console, & teach each other, & even reprove, rebuke, exhort one another!
  - c. And *this* is how we know this love (he’s about to give an example – a *perfect* example). Examples are important for us in understanding God’s commands. He gives us commands, then calls our attention to those who have obeyed them (e.g., David, a man after God’s own heart, was and still is a great example of commitment & obedience to God).
  - d. But the *perfect* example of love was Jesus Christ! He laid down his life for us! Certainly God expressed His love in creating us & providing for our physical & spiritual needs throughout time, but the cross was the ultimate expression of God’s love for His creation. God the Father expressed it in sending His only begotten Son (**Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:9; Rom 5:8**), and Jesus expressed it in being obedient to the plan even though He knew the extreme pain & suffering it would entail. He loved us enough to give up everything & endure this pain so that we could have forgiveness for **our** sins!
  - e. Regarding “of God,” having looked at the whole verse we see that “of God” (or “of Christ” as some commentators say), whether original or not, fits perfectly. How do we know the love of God or Christ (or love in general)? By this example!
2. The example followed
  - a. He’s commanded us to love, & now he’s shown us how. Jesus’ example is still the ultimate *physical* expression of agape love today – that someone would give up his own life for mine.
  - b. John says this is our example – that we should do the same thing. What does he mean by this?
    - He doesn’t mean we should give our lives for one another like Jesus did (i.e., for the same purpose). Obviously this is not needed; Jesus’ death was “once for all” (**Heb 7:27; 10:10**). Plus this doesn’t make sense (we’d all be dead)!
    - Nor does he mean we should give our lives *spiritually* (sacrifice souls’ eternity) for one another (cf. **Rom 9:3**).
    - We should be *willing* to die for one another –to protect a brother from *physical* harm. We don’t expect this to happen too often (although it may in other parts of the world); it’s about our *willingness* to die for a brother!
    - We should be *willing* to die for one another –to protect a brother from *spiritual* harm. This is obviously a much less realistic scenario (how might my *physical* death save your soul?). John doesn’t go into these possibilities. Again it’s about *willingness*. **IF** my death would cause an erring brother to repent, then I should be willing to die!
    - If this seems extreme, you may have a valuation problem: **1**) ask yourself how much you value/love your brethren, and **2**) remember what’s waiting for the faithful child of God *after* this life (**5:13**)! Don’t overvalue life on earth!
  - c. Before we spend too much time thinking about examples of how or why we might die for one another, stop & think about the point John is making: **love one another** – in all the ways we’ve discussed – *even to the point of dying!* He’s not saying to go around looking for ways to die for each other! He’s saying to be *willing* to die for each other. Because if you’re willing to **die** for a brother, how much more willing are you to bear his burden, or forbear & forgive him, or listen to him when he needs to talk, or teach him the truth? So this isn’t just about dying for someone (notice **v. 17**).

**B. The Practice of Love (v. 17):** *But whoso hath this world’s good (ability), and seeth his brother have need (opportunity), & shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* (responsibility)

1. “*But*” –this shows a contrast to the love commanded in **v. 16**. It shows us that this (**v. 17**) is *part* of the love that’s expected.
2. *Whoso has this world’s good* – this shows that responsibility exists *where we have ability*. God doesn’t expect us to do what we are incapable of doing (by lack of resources, etc.). You can’t jeopardize your own family’s wellbeing in order to help others (**1 Tim 5:8**). But don’t use this as an excuse, minimizing your ability in order to ignore your responsibility!
3. “*Goods*” is defined as “livelihood” (Strong); that by which life is sustained, resources, wealth” (Thayer), so it’s more than money, it’s whatever life need you may have. God expects us to help a brother in *any* way he needs, as we have ability. So we should be aware of **1**) the needs of each of our brothers & sisters, as well as **2**) the things/abilities/resources we personally have that can we can give or use to help the brother or sister in need.
4. But he that *sees* (“discerns,” indicates effort) *his brother has needs, & shuts up his compassion* (concern, emotion) – refuses to help, doesn’t care! *How dwelleth the love of God in him?* This is rhetorical; the love of God *doesn’t* dwell in this brother.
  - a. Another refutation of ‘once saved, always saved’ – this brother doesn’t have the love of God. So how can he be saved?
  - b. The “love of God” – his love of God; when we don’t love God’s children, we don’t love God (cf. **5:2; 4:20**).
  - c. The “love of God” – God’s love; *God’s* love was shown by dying for this same brother that you refuse to help even though you have the ability to do so. How can you say that His love is in you? If it is, it will show! Love is like faith: if you have it, it will be manifest in works. If there is no outward evidence of it, it’s not there!

**C. The Message of Love (v. 18):** *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed & in truth.*

He’s not saying “Don’t *say* ‘I love you!’” Saying you love someone is good, but don’t just say it, **DO** it! Be willing to give up your life, literally or figuratively; i.e., *part* of your life, not being selfish with your time, etc. This may be tougher than dying!

**CONCLUSION:** It’s hard to love each other the way God commands, especially if we don’t know each other! How well do we know each other? Are you willing to give your life for a brother? Of course, the ultimate love is shown in concern for one’s soul (**Mk 10:21**).

III. **THE PROMISE OF LOVE (v. 19-24):**

A. **Love promises us assurance before God (v. 19-21)**

(v. 19) *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*

1. *Hereby (by this)* – by what? Look back to v. 18: By loving in deed & in truth (doing, not just saying; actions, not just words), by **not** shutting up your compassion for your brethren in need when you have the ability to help (v. 17), by being willing to lay down your life for the brethren (v. 16)!
2. By this – loving one another as Christ loved us, we have certain promises:
  - a. We know that we are *of* (out of; source) *the truth*. John uses this preposition over 20 times in this letter (e.g., 2:29–*born of God*; 3:8–*of the devil*; 3:9–*born of God*; 3:10–*of God*; 3:12–*of that wicked one*). He’s showing that your actions (obedience or disobedience) will reveal where you come from – are you from God or Satan? If you have true agape love for your brethren, you’re of the truth (of God).
  - b. And we *shall assure* (persuade, convince, trust, be confident) *our hearts before him*. Assurance is very important in any way we might use it. E.g., assurance in our personal relationships–*knowing* we’re loved by our spouse, parents, siblings, children, friends, and that these relationships are secure. This produces the opposite of worry & stress!
  - c. But there’s no assurance more important than being confident before God. When you’re loving your brethren (as in v. 16-18), you’re living like God said; you’re doing righteousness, loving your brother, not sinning, you’ve passed from death to life (v. 14), so you can have complete confidence before God. Of what do we need to be assured/persuaded? That God loves us, that He’s forgiven us & we have eternal life (5:13), and that we can pray to him (v. 22).
  - d. We have this assurance **IF** we love (agape) the brethren. This is not the *only* thing required of us; it’s being used as synecdoche (the part stands for the whole) to represent keeping *all* of His commandments (v. 22). 2:28

(v. 20-21) *For if our heart (conscience) condemn us (find fault with, blame), God is greater than our heart, & knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*

1. (v. 20) This is *not* teaching to simply follow your conscience (which is a good guide **ONLY** if it’s been trained by the Word).
2. If your conscience condemns you (you feel guilty), contextually it’s because your heart isn’t “assured before Him” (v. 19). And this is because you’re not loving your brethren in deed & truth (v. 18), because you’re not fulfilling your responsibility to help a brother when you have the ability to do so (v. 17). And God knows (even if you hide it in your heart); He’s greater than your heart (i.e., He knows you better than you do, because He know *all* things). You can’t hide your lack of love from Him! And He’s a greater Judge than your conscience is. So you need to acknowledge this sin, repent, & confess it (1:8-10).
3. (v. 21) If your conscience *doesn’t* condemn you... Again, contextually this would be because you ARE loving your brethren according to v. 16-18 (i.e., keeping *all* His commands). If you’re doing this, then you have confidence toward God. How?
4. “Confidence” here is the same word as in Heb 4:16–“*Let us therefore come boldly (w/confidence) unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*” Prayer! And this is the very thing John speaks of next.

B. **Love promises us answered prayers (v. 22-24)**

(v. 22) *And whatsoever we ask we receive of him because we keep his commandments & do those things...pleasing in his sight.*

1. *Whatever we ask, we receive of him...* When discussing prayer, most people are much more likely to remember this part of the verse, and seem to prefer leaving off the rest! They remember *Ask & it shall be given unto you (Mt 7:7), When you pray, believe you’ll receive it and you will (Mk 11:24), Whatever you ask, I’ll do (Jn 14:14)*. People tend to forget the conditions:
  - a. **Jn 14:14**–“*If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.*” Note also that this was spoken to the apostles.
  - b. **Jn 15:7**–“*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*”
  - c. **1 John 5:14**–“*...if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.*”
2. Even in this verse, we notice two conditions: 1) We keep His commandments. Most people I talk to want to pray & receive, but aren’t at all interested in keeping His commands! People like this have no business praying at all! They’re not interested in 2) doing what pleases *Him*. These two things are really the same (keeping His commands & doing what pleases Him), but not **exactly**: the 1<sup>st</sup> addresses your actions, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> addresses your attitude. We must obey His commands, but we must also do it with the right attitude – being concerned with what pleases *Him*, not ourselves!
3. If you’re doing those things that are pleasing to Him, then you won’t be praying simply for those things that please *you*; you’ll be asking for the things that will help you *continue* to obey His commands & be pleasing to Him.

(v. 23) *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, & love one another, as he gave us commandment.* Believe on His name (in general), love one another (specific to the context)

1. This is his commandment (singular) – His *only* command? No, He uses the plural “commandments” in v. 22 & v. 24. This one commandment sums up all others (like the greatest commands – Mt 22:37). If you do *this*, you’ll do all others as well.
2. *Believe...* **Jn 12:42** teaches us clearly that to believe means to follow & obey. Here, to *believe on the name* (authority, character) of Jesus is to accept His authority and to obey Him.
3. *Love one another as He gave us commandment (Jn 13:34; 15:12; 1Jn 2:9-11)*. Again notice the parallels: do righteousness, keep His commands, believe on Jesus; here: believe on the name of Jesus & love one another (can’t do one w/out the other).

(v. 24) *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, & he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*

1. He’s been saying to abide in Him (2:28; 3:6); now he makes it clear that this is done by keeping His commands. This is the very thing Jesus said to His apostles (**Jn 14:23; 15:7,10**–“*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love...*”)
2. And we know *He* abides in *us* by the Spirit... This isn’t about *how* He abides in us, but how *we know* He abides in us – i.e., by the miracles they did through His ability; these miracles provided & confirmed the Word we’re to obey (cf. Mk 16:20).

**CONCLUSION:** Again, compare the literal & figurative: Fig.–we abide in Him, He abides in us, He’s given us His Spirit; Lit.– we keep His commands, we ask & receive, **we love one another**. If we don’t love one another, we don’t believe in Jesus and we’re not of the truth!