

Lesson 10 – 1 John 3:11-18

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Review/Introduction

John is writing so we might know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13) – so they may see the objective truth (1 John 5:11-13) and subjective evidences (obedience, love, dealing with sin, progressive sanctification, adhering to truth and rejecting spiritual lies, etc.) that give assurance of salvation. Both objective truth and subjective evidence go hand-in-hand. You cannot have one without the other.

John presents tests to determine if true saving faith has been exercised or are the readers (and ultimately us) deceived. He makes it very clear that a profession of possessing salvation without the evidences that flow from salvation is self-deception.

The Scriptures are clear that true salvation is accompanied by a changed life. Those who are truly saved will be progressing in sanctification because of God's work in their life and because they are striving in the power of Spirit to grow in their relationship with Christ.

¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling;** ¹³**for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.**
(Philippians 2:12-13)

John presents his tests in four spirals laying out doctrinal and conduct tests or evidences of true, real, actual regeneration. Each spiral starts with a doctrinal test then presents conduct tests. The spirals all have similar topics that are expanded on and/or reiterated in each spiral. John uses repetition to present his simple, yet profound, truths to encourage his readers and us.

- I. Introduction – Christ is the way of fellowship (1:1-4)
- II. Evidence of true saving faith – Spiral 1 (1:5-2:17)
 - A. Doctrine – Hold fast to truth – The way of salvation from sin (1:5-2:2)
 - B. Conduct – Obedience (2:3-6)
 - C. Conduct – Love (2:7-11)**
 - D. Conduct – Sin (Don't love the world) (2:12-17)
- III. Evidence of true saving faith – Spiral 2 (2:18-3:24)
 - A. Doctrine – Hold fast to truth – Don't Apostatize (2:18-27)
 - B. Conduct – Christ's coming is a purifying fixed hope (2:28-3:3)
 - C. Conduct – Sin/obedience (3:4-10)
 - D. Conduct – Love (3:11-18)**
 - E. Conduct – A conviction-free walk (3:19-24)
- IV. Evidence of true saving faith – Spiral 3 (4:1-21)
 - A. Doctrine – Hold fast to truth – Reject false teachers (4:1-6)
 - B. Conduct – Love (4:7-21)**
 - C. Conduct – Obedience (5:1-5)
- V. Evidence of true saving faith – Spiral 4 (5:6-21)
 - A. Doctrine – Hold fast to truth – Christ is the way of salvation (5:6-12)
 - B. Conduct – Confidences (5:13-20)
- VI. Conclusion (5:21)

Today we will look at the third conduct test in the second spiral. This is the second time that John addresses the conduct test of love.

Spiral 2 – Conduct – Love (3:11-18)

1. The message (3:10-11)

¹⁰By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. ¹¹For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;

¹⁰By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. ¹¹For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. (ESV)

John is driving home his point that true salvation is accompanied by a changed lifestyle, a lifestyle that is marked by perseverance and progressive sanctification.

He had just laid out the spiritual paternity test. He just said that “the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil” (3:7-8). And “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God”.

But also, the one who does not “love his brother” is a child of the devil.

We have already seen that “love” is the sacrificial commitment of my will to another’s needs and best interests regardless of the cost to myself. Love seeks another’s highest good, even if it costs a great deal; even if there is no response of love or gratitude. Love is not an impulse from the feelings. It does not always run with the natural inclinations nor does it spend itself only upon those whom we like or deem worthy to receive love. It is an act of the will, so we can choose to love even if we do not feel like doing it.

Here the usage speaks of a lifestyle of love; a direction of one’s life that is marked by love. If that is not true, then you are a child of the devil. What a strong statement!

❖ **What is your lifestyle?**

Let’s remember what John as already said about love in 1 John 2:7-11.

If are regenerated then you have a moral imperative to walk in the same manner as He walked. If you are regenerate, then love is an outflow of your connectedness to Christ. Conversely, hate is a characteristic of the one who is in darkness, walks in darkness, and is deceived about their final state.

So, when John says “brother” he means those united in Christ, but we are not to limit this to other believers. We should think of it as “love everyone, but especially believers”.

If you say (as a habitual pattern of life) that you are in the light and yet hate your brother/sister then you not only are not in the light, but you have never been in the light. You are in darkness.

❖ **Are there those in your life that you choose to not love?**

Now in this spiral, John is going deeper in his description of love, giving an example of hate and practical ways to love. But the message is the same. “Love one another” has been Christ’s message since He began His earthly ministry. That message continued through the apostles as they “taught all that Jesus commanded” (Matthew 28:16-20).

³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**, even as I have loved you, that you also **love one another**. (John 13:34)

¹²“This is My commandment, that you **love one another**, just as I have loved you. (John 15:12)

¹⁷This I command you, that you **love one another**. (John 15:17)

⁹Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to **love one another**; (1 Thessalonians 4:9)

⁸Owe nothing to anyone except to **love one another**; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law. (Romans 13:8)

²²Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently **love one another** from the heart, (1 Peter 1:22)

John’s epistles pick up on this theme of love one another as a distinguishing characteristic of the believer (1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12; 2 John 1:5). If you are a believer, you love. That happens because Christ lives in you (Galatians 2:20), so it **MUST** happen if you have surrendered your life to Christ.

❖ Do you actively accept the message to love or reject it?

2. Hate – The opposite of love (3:12-15)

¹²not as Cain, *who* was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous. ¹³Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. ¹⁵Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

¹²We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous. ¹³Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. ¹⁵Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. (ESV)

A subjective evidence of salvation is loving one another. Now, John gives the negative example of Cain. Let’s look at the account from Genesis.

¹Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, “I have gotten a manchild with *the help of* the Lord.” ²Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. (Genesis 4:1-2)

So, Cain was the older brother of Abel. Cain was farmer and Abel was a shepherd. We see something else about Abel that was not true of Cain. Jesus calls Abel “righteous”. And Hebrews says that Abel had faith and that faith was demonstrated by righteous deeds.

³⁵so that upon you may fall *the guilt of* all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of **righteous Abel** to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. (Matthew 23:35)

¹Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ²For by it the men of old gained approval. ³By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. ⁴**By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.** ⁵By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (Hebrews 11:1-6)

Remember that the way of salvation from sin has never changed between the OT and NT.

⁵And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” ⁶**Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.** (Genesis 15:5-6)

³For what does the Scripture say? “**Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.**” ⁴Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵But to the one who does not work, but **believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,** (Romans 4:3-5)

There are two people bringing an “offering” to God. One is saved through faith – Abel; one is not – Cain. The point here is that God only accepts “works” as an outflow of gratitude for salvation, not as a way to get salvation.

Said another way, God only accepts worship from His redeemed; unredeemed cannot worship. Abel, being saved by faith brought an offering that was the best that he could. Cain, apparently did not because he had no faith. Instead of repenting and believing and then striving to worship in spirit and truth which would result in a better offering (which the redeemed would do), Cain becomes angry and hates (something the unredeemed would do).

³So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. ⁴Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; ⁵but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. ⁶Then the Lord said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

The offering was not the issue, it was Cain's heart.

¹⁶For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. ¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. (Psalm 51:16-17)

❖ Do you see God directed methods of worship in your life?

Because Cain had no faith, he hated. He hated so badly that he lured his brother out into the field and killed him.

⁸Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. (Genesis 4:1-8)

“Cain was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.” In John's inspired thinking, evil deeds demonstrate not being saved and righteous deeds demonstrate salvation.

Don't be surprised that the world, filled with Cains, hates you, spiritual brothers of Abel. The world and those of the world, children of the devil, hate.

¹⁸“If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it hated* you. ¹⁹If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. (John 15:18-19)

Love is a subjective evidence of salvation. “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.” We can know we are a child of God if we see supernatural love being evident. But, hating demonstrates that salvation has not occurred.

❖ What demonstrations of love do you see in your life?

3. Love is practical (3:16-18)

¹⁶We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

¹⁶By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (ESV)

Saying you love is not adequate as a subjective evidence of salvation. True love is demonstrated. So, John gives examples of love.

1. Laying down your life (v16)

“Laid down His life” is a phrase unique to John. Its usage here clearly refers to the crucifixion.

¹¹“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. (John 10:11)

¹²“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.
¹³Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:12-13)

Love is demonstrated by extreme, sacrificial service. Look at the example of Christ.

¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that **He gave** His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴**who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age**, according to the will of our God and Father, (Galatians 1:3-4)

²⁰I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, **who loved me and gave Himself up for me**. (Galatians 2:20)

²and **walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us**, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (Ephesians 5:2)

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, **just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her**, (Ephesians 5:25)

⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but **emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant**, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸Being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself** by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)

¹¹For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹²instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³**looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus**, ¹⁴**who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds**. (Titus 2:11-14)

Did Christ limit the expression of His love? Did He stop short in giving Himself for you? No! Then you must not limit or stop short in giving of yourself in loving the brethren.

❖ **Do you come short in giving yourself to love the brethren?**

“Ought” means to owe something to someone and conveys the sense of necessity, duty, or moral obligation. In other words, there is no choice. Since Christ laid down His life, so must you lay down your life for the brethren. The usage shows this to be a lifestyle, something that is continually done. There is no limit to the extreme, sacrificial effort to serve the brethren.

Cain's hatred moved him to murder his brother, the selfless, sacrificial love of Christ exuding from you as you re filled with the Spirit “ought” to move you to sacrifice for your brethren.

❖ **Do you fulfill your moral obligation to give yourself in the love of the brethren?**

2. Not closing your heart (v17)

The “world’s goods” describes the basic necessities of life.

⁷For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. ⁸If we have **food and covering**, with these we shall be content. (1 Timothy 6:7-8)

¹⁵If a brother or sister is without **clothing and in need of daily food**, (James 2:15)

❖ Do you have the basic necessities?

“Need” describes necessities. These are the same “needs” in the early church which were met by the brethren.

⁴⁵and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have **need**. (Acts 2:45)

³⁴For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales ³⁵and lay them at the apostles’ feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had **need**. (Acts 4:34-35)

These are the basic needs of life that could not be met by oneself in spite of the sincere effort to do so.

⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you, ⁸nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you; ⁹not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example. ¹⁰For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: **if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either**. ¹¹For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. ¹²Now **such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread**. ¹³But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. (2 Thessalonians 3:7-13)

“Sees” means a continual, contemplative observation of the someone’s circumstances. This means that there isn’t a question about the need. There is no need to waffle about the need. There is a need, without a doubt.

“Closes his heart” means to shut, close, or lock a door. The usage pictures a deliberate, hard-hearted act.

While the application in the Hebrew theocracy was different, we see the same prohibition in the OT about shutting one’s heart.

⁷“If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, **you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother**; (Deuteronomy 15:7)

James shows the same idea of compassionately meeting needs as a demonstration of true saving faith.

¹⁵If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? ¹⁷Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. (James 2:15-17)

John’s thought is clear – if you have the means to meet a true need and yet deliberately harden your heart, then you do not love (i.e., you hate) and you demonstrate that the “love of God does not abide in you”. You demonstrate that regeneration has not occurred.

❖ **Do you demonstrate love by meeting needs?**

3. Love in deed and truth (v18)

John finished his thought about love by appealing to his “little children”, his dear ones.

Real love is not lip service. Shallowness gives lip service. Selfishness gives lip service. Insincerity gives lip service. Hypocrisy gives lip service without deeds.

“Truth” is that which is seen or expressed as it really is. It is the congruity between a reality and a declaration which professes to describe the reality. Love is real love when it corresponds to deeds and is not lip service. This is love flowing from regeneration, from the life of Christ being lived through you.

❖ **Do you practice hypocritical “love” (not really love)?**

Conclusion

John is writing to present tests of true saving faith. The purpose is to ensure that his readers know if they have eternal life (actual, true, real regeneration) or not. Today, we looked at the demonstrating true love which is a subjective evidence of salvation.

Additional Study

1. Each time you come to the Scriptures, pray for the Spirit to give you understanding.
2. Read 1 John once this week a chapter at a time (one chapter a day for five days).
3. Pray that God would show you personal applications from today’s passage.
4. Read today’s passage noting repeated words/ideas and ask yourself what John means.
5. Re-read the notes from today and contemplate the thought questions.