

# “Love and Hate”

## (1 John 3:11-24 ~ Part 2)

### Introduction

➤ The book of “1 John” was written to Christians – to all who professed to be a follower in Christ (see 2:12-14, 19; 3:1; 5:13). In doing so, throughout this book, the apostle John gave several tests to help Christians examine the veracity and maturity of their Christian faith (see 1Cor.11:28; 2Cor.13:5). As is typical throughout this book, the apostle John utilized a writing style of extreme contrasts. He did this, writing words inspired by the Holy Spirit of God (2Tim.3:16; 2Pet.1:21), to show that there is no such thing of a person being “kind of” a Christian or a “nominal” Christian (i.e., Christian in name only).

While every Christian struggles to be a faithful Christian, true Christians do not merely pretend to be Christians – they are possessors of Christ not merely professors of Christ. While their struggles are real (Jms.3:2), so is their faith. While their love for Christ is not perfect, it is indeed genuine.

➤ This is evident in the passage before us this morning. Once again, John wrote in terms of stark contrasts. In this passage, John likens the Christian’s life to that of Christ and the non-Christian’s life to that of Cain. The Christian lives a life filled with and compelled by God’s love. The non-Christian, having rejected Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, is devoid of God’s (saving/sanctifying) love. Therefore, the way of Christ is the way of (true) love, and the way of Cain is the way of hate.

Those who truly love God, and His Son Jesus Christ, are compelled (by the Spirit of God and the Word of God) to love what God loves – especially those God loves and who love God. For the love of God is not from this world, and the world is opposed to the love of God.

**1 John 3:11-24** ~ “For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. <sup>12</sup>We 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. <sup>13</sup>Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. <sup>14</sup>We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. <sup>15</sup>Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. <sup>16</sup>By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. <sup>17</sup>But 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? <sup>18</sup>Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. <sup>19</sup>By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; <sup>20</sup>for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. <sup>21</sup>Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; <sup>22</sup>and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. <sup>23</sup>And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. <sup>24</sup>Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.”

➤ Biblical love is not merely a feeling, or even an emotion. It is a conscious decision to act in a way that truly benefits the recipient, by demonstrating the love of God. This love is the highest and purest form of love [*agapaō* (vb., 5x; vs.11, 14<sup>2x</sup>, 18, 23), *agape* (n., 2x; vs.16, 17), *agapetos* (adj., vs.21) ; variant forms of this word for love used 52 times in 1 John (105 verses). It is selfless, sacrificial, and sacred. It is a love that comes from God (1Jn.4:7-8, 16), and therefore a love that reflects the attributes and character of God.

In this passage of Scripture, we find several truths regarding the Christian’s call to love as God loves.

## I. The **Instruction** (vs.11-12)

- It is important to point out what may be obvious: this is a command from the Lord. It is not a suggestion from the Lord, and therefore not optional for Christians. This (subjunctive) verb – “*we should love*” (vs.11; *agapaō*) – indicates this is an action to be followed, not merely a feeling to be felt or an idea to be thought. As we will see, the command to love is active not passive. We are not necessarily commanded to feel love for one another, as much as we are commanded to be loving toward one another. We are not to “police” how others love us, but to actively love others (whether it is reciprocated or not).
- In verses 11-12, this command is stated in the positive (what to do) and the negative (what not to do).

### A. What to do (vs.11)

- The point is terribly easy to understand, and yet often very difficult to apply. The point is this: those who truly love God, those who have been loved by God with a sovereign and salvific love, will love that which God loves and who God loves. A person cannot truly love God and hate what God loves. To put it more specifically, those who are truly God’s children (Christians) will love all who are God’s children (Christians). This is not only common sense, but also a command of God.

**Matt 22:37-40** ~ “And [Jesus] said ... ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup>This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup>And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.’”

Therefore, the failure to love other Christians (as God loves them) is a sin, and – apart from confession and repentance – this sin can be evidence of a false profession of faith; proof that the professing Christian is actually unsaved.

- This love is not merely an emotion or a feeling. It is an action, an act of the will. It is not an option or suggestion for the Christian, it is a command to be obeyed. In fact, it is the fulfillment of the entire law of God.

**John 15:12** ~ “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

**Gal 5:14** ~ “For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”  
[Lev.19:18; cf. Rom.13:10]

### B. What not to do (vs.12)

- Interestingly, and surprisingly, the apostle John contrasted the Christian who loves with that of Cain – the first murderer in human history – “*we should love one another. We should not be like Cain*” (vs.11-12). To put it bluntly, “We should love one another, not murder one another.”
- Cain is forever an illustration of hatred – an extreme example of failing to love his brother. Overcome by envy, anger, and hatred, Cain literally killed his own brother. “*We 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*” (vs.12). We dare not dismiss this as mere hyperbole. The illustration is graphic because the sin of hatred is so insidious. This physical act resulted from spiritual rebellion against God – the physical sin of murder arose from the spiritual sin of hatred (unrighteous anger). All visible/physical sin, stem from invisible/spiritual sin.
- This serves as a graphic illustration of what not to do. That is, do not give in to hatred as Cain did. For even without a murderous physical act, hatred is spiritually murderous – essentially killing brothers and sisters in Christ. A person is either living according to the way of Cain, or living according to the way of Christ. “In God’s eyes, hatred is the moral equivalent of murder” (John MacArthur; *ibid*).

**1 John 3:15** ~ “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

## II. The **Exhortation** (vs.13-18)

➤ Notice the sharp distinction between Christians and non-Christians: *“Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you”* (vs.13). In other words, while hatred is not a characteristic of a Christian it is certainly a characteristic of a non-Christians (see Tit.3:3; Col.1:21). The point here is the sharp and blatant difference between Christians and non-Christians when it comes to (true/biblical) love (See Jn.13:35; Gal.5:19-24).

➤ Therefore, Christians ought not be *“surprised”* (vs.13; *thaumazō*, “to be filled with wonder”) when they are hated by non-Christians. However, it ought to be surprising when Christians hate and especially surprising when Christians hate other Christians!

As the world hates Christ, and in hating Christ they hate God as well (Jn.15:23), they will express that hatred in those who follow Christ and worship God. Therefore, it should not be surprising to Christians when they suffer opposition or persecution for Christ. Rather, it should be surprising to Christians when they do not (2Tim.3:12-13).

### A. The hatred of the world (vs.13, 15)

➤ The phrase *“the world”* (*kosmos*; vs.13, used 23x in 1 John) refers not to the physical planet (earth) but to the devil’s rule in and over all unbelievers and all that is ungodly. The world – all that is ungodly and unrighteous in this world – is contrary to God’s will and subject to God just and eternal wrath. As believers, we are called to be in the world but not of the world (see Jn.15:19; 1Jn.2:15-17; 4:4-6; 5:19).

➤ This does not mean that every unbeliever is seething with anger, or brimming with murderous violence (although we can clearly see much volatility and violence, hatred and hostility, in the world!). However, it does mean that every unbeliever is devoid of God’s saving and sanctifying love.

It is important to remember that all unbelievers are not as sinful as they could possibly be, but they are (as all Christians once were) totally sinful and utterly condemned. Consequently, as *“the whole world lies in the power of the evil one”* 1Jn.5:19), all unbelievers are at enmity with God and the things of God. True (biblical) love is only possessed by those who, by putting their faith in Christ Jesus, have received the Holy Spirit of God.

➤ The reason for this hatred from the world – that is, from unbelievers – is that they ultimately hate God and the things of God (Jn.3:19-21; Rom.1:30; 8:7; Jms.4:4). Even if non-Christians do not conspicuously hate Christians, we know that they fundamentally hate all that the Christian worships, believes, and does in their pursuit of knowing Christ and making Christ known. Christians will be hated by those who hate Jesus Christ; they will be rejected by those who reject Christ; they will be persecuted by those who would persecute Christ (see Matt.10:16-22; Jn.15:18-25; 17:14).

➤ Consequently, spiritually speaking, *“Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him”* (vs.15). In trying to make his point, John again used absolute contrasts. This does not mean that every hateful word or act automatically/immediately condemns a person to hell, or that no one who commits murder will go to heaven. Rather, this means that a life that is characterized by hatred – unrepentant hateful attitudes and behaviors (especially unrepentant hatred toward other Christians) – is evidence of an unsaved life.

### B. The love of Christians (vs.14, 16-18)

➤ As those who have been saved by God’s sovereign and sanctifying love, and consequently indwelt by the power and presence of God’s Holy Spirit, Christians are compelled by God to love the way God

loves and what God loves. Christian love – selfless, sacrificial, and sacred love – characterizes every true Christian, and worldly hatred characterizes every non-Christian.

Some have rightly said that since loving God is the greatest commandment (Matt.22:37-38), failing to love God is the greatest sin. It could also be argued that since loving others is the second greatest commandment (Matt.22:39), failure to love others is the second greatest sin.

➤ In these verses, we find not only the reason Christians love but the way Christians love.

### 1. The reason Christians love (vs.14)

First and foremost, the reason Christians love is because God has graciously, mercifully, and lovingly saved them. Christians do not love because they are simply more loving, or because they are better people. It is important to remember that apart from God's saving grace, Christians are just as hateful and sinful as non-Christians. What separates Christians from non-Christians is Christ – Christians are saved by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

This truth is referenced at the beginning of verse fourteen: *“We know that we have passed out of death into life”* (vs.14). This is an overt reverence to the Christian's salvation in Christ. Apart from Christ, we are still dead in our sins (Eph.2:1) and justly condemned to an eternal death (Jn.3:16-18, 36). All those who truly receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, have been *“made ... alive”* (Eph.2:5) – *“born again”* (Jn.3:3-8; cf. Tit.3:5) – by the grace of God and in the power of God. True conversion is radical and comprehensive.

**1 John 5:12** ~ “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

**John 5:24** ~ “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

**2 Cor 5:17** ~ “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

True love then is a natural/supernatural byproduct of being saved, and therefore is evidence of (not meriting) one's true salvation: *“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death”* (vs.14).

**1 John 2:9-11** ~ “Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.  
<sup>10</sup>Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

<sup>11</sup>But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”

**1 John 3:10** ~ “By 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.”

**1 John 4:7-8** ~ “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

**1 John 4:20-21** ~ “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. <sup>21</sup>And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

**1 John 5:2** ~ “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.”

While this serves as an appropriate self-examination of the veracity and maturity of one's Christian faith, it also is to be an encouragement to Christians who are striving to love as Christ loves. This love is not something Christians "muster up" on their own, or a love that they have to cultivate apart from the Holy Spirit of God. "*We love because [God] first loved us*" (1Jn.4:19).

Again, this is not meant to imply that Christians are immune from hateful feelings, attitudes, or behaviors. Rather, it does mean that Christians do not live hateful lives – when we hate, we are to quickly and sincerely repent, and seek to "*walk in love, as Christ loved us*" (Eph.5:2).

✓Illust: "Would it not be comfortable to you if you could certainly know that indeed you have passed from death to life? I know not what your minds are busied about; but this should be your great care, to get out of the cursed condition you were in by nature, and to know you are gotten out, and shall not come into condemnation. Here is one evidence that will most help to clear it to you: If you love the brethren, you have passed from death to life; if you love not, you abide in death. Therefore let not this mark be obscure to you, lest your spiritual condition be dark and obscure to you; and therefore you must excel in brotherly love, and exercise it in a self-denying way" (Thomas Manton; "Sermons Upon 1 John 3").

## 2. The way Christians love (vs.16-18)

As we have seen, biblical (Christian or true) love is vastly different from worldly love. This is evident not only in the root of love but also in the fruit of it. Christians should be the most loving people on the planet. This is not a permissive, or an unconditional love, but a love that is both from Christ and unto the honor/glory of Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14, the apostle Paul described the impetus of his ministry saying, "*The love of Christ controls us ...*". To the Ephesians, Paul prayed that they would be "*rooted and grounded in love*" (Eph.3:17), and described the Christians love for Christ as "*love incorruptible*" (Eph.6:24).

**1 Thess 4:9-10** ~ "Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, <sup>10</sup>for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more"

In verses 16-18, John notes three important aspects regarding the way Christians love.

### a. The epitome of Christian love (vs.16)

As always, Jesus Christ is the supreme example of how we are to live the Christian life. When it comes to loving one another, Jesus perfected and personified love in literally giving His life for us: "*By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us*" (vs.16). This, of course, is referring to Christ's substitutionary death on the cross, which is the greatest example of selfless and sacrificial love (see Jn.10:11, 15, 17-18; 13:37-38; 15:13; cf. Is.53:4-6; 2Cor.5:21).

**John 3:16** ~ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

**John 10:11** ~ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

**Rom 5:8** ~ "but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

The first part of verse sixteen is doctrine, and the second part of the verse is instruction: *“and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers”* (vs.16). Here again is the stark contrast between the way of Christ and the way of Cain (vs.12). Where Cain literally murdered his own brother out of hateful envy, Christ literally sacrificed His own life out of selfless love. We are to be like Christ, and not like Cain.

**John 13:1, 15** ~ “Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ... <sup>15</sup>For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.”

**John 13:34** ~ “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

**John 15:13** ~ “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

For some this can have a literal application, in that they may be called to be a martyr for Christ or to sacrificially give their lives another. For others, this is a reference to the extent that we should go in expression our Christian love for one another. This is the ceiling. This is the high watermark. If you wondering just how much you should love, or how far you should go in loving, your brother or sister in Christ her is your answer: to the extent of laying down your life for them.

Again, we must fight against our natural (prideful) inclination to make these verses about those who should be loving us in this way. To be sure, we all want to be loved with this degree of sacrificial and selfless love. But we must remember that the command is not to make others love us in this way, but for us to love others in this way.

## **b. The evidence of Christian love (vs.17)**

While no Christian loves perfectly, this is to be every Christian’s goal. Since love can be kind of an abstract concept – hard to define and hard to identify – John gave an example as to how we can evaluate the genuineness of our love for one another: *“But 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?”* (vs.17).

We may never have the opportunity to give our lives to save another, but we all have many opportunities throughout our lives to help a *“brother [or sister] in need”* (vs.17). This not to suggest that we are commanded to help everyone who asks for help, or that Christians are to live in some socialistic eutopia.

The key here is twofold: 1) having the means to help (*“if anyone has the world’s goods”*; vs.17), and 2) knowing someone – particularly another Christian – in genuine need (*“sees his brother in need”*; vs.17).

So here is the test of a Christian’s love: The true Christian will not be apathetic toward another Christian in need. How does the true Christian, with the (abundant) resources to help, respond to a brother or sister in need? When they are able, and when it is appropriate, the true Christian – in whom *“God’s love abide[s]”* (vs.17) – expresses their love by helping those in genuine need.

Notice John’s rhetorical, self-examining, question: *“... 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?”* (vs.17). The phrase *“closes his heart against him”* may imply an intentional (conscious) effort to resist the natural impulse to help someone in need. Like knowingly *“clos[ing]”* (*kleiō*), or slamming, a door in someone’s face!

**Matt 23:13** ~ “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut [*kleiō*] the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in.”

This is not merely failing to help someone in need (although that is certainly included) but failing to even feel compassion for someone in need. The Greek word translated “*heart*” (*splanchnon*; vs.17) is not the usual New Testament word for heart (*kardia*), but a word that could literally be translated “intestines” or “bowels.”

**Acts 1:18** ~ “(Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels [*splanchnon*] gushed out.”

**Luke 1:78** ~ “because of the tender [*splanchnon*] mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high”

**Phil 1:8** ~ “For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection [*splanchnon*] of Christ Jesus.”

**Col 3:12** ~ “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts [*oiktirmos splanchnon*], kindness, humility, meekness, and patience”

**Matt 9:36** ~ “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion [*splanchnizomai*, vb.] for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”

**Mark 1:41** [Jesus cleansing a leper] ~ “Moved with pity [*splanchnizomai*, vb.], he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, ‘I will; be clean.’”

In today’s English vernacular, we would use expressions like “gut-wrenching” or figuratively “feeling sick to our stomachs”, or even “heartache”, trying to convey deep and visceral (troubling, anguishing) emotions.

**Luke 10:25-37** ~ “And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ <sup>26</sup>He said to him, ‘What is written in the Law? How do you read it?’ <sup>27</sup>And he answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind [Deut.6:5], and your neighbor as yourself [Lev.19:18].’ <sup>28</sup>And he said to him, ‘You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.’ <sup>29</sup>But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’

<sup>30</sup>Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup>Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup>So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup>But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion [*splanchnizomai*, vb.]. <sup>34</sup>He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup>And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ <sup>36</sup>Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?’ <sup>37</sup>He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy [*eleos*].’ And Jesus said to him, ‘You go, and do likewise.’”

**Luke 15:20** ~ “And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion [*splanchnizomai*, vb.], and ran and embraced him and kissed him.”

In typical fashion, R.C. Sproul stated this brilliantly: “Though the Bible denies universal brotherhood, it affirms universal neighborhood” (from “The Parables of Jesus” video series, “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”). While God is not the Father of all mankind (He is only Father to those whom He has saved and adopted in Christ), Christians are called to sincerely and actively love everyone (Lev.19:18; Matt.22:39).

It is important to keep in mind that helping someone in need is not an attempt to earn or secure one’s salvation (which only truly comes by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone), but the evidence of one’s true salvation in Christ. While we may not be called to give our lives to save another, we are certainly called to use our loves to help one another.

**Luke 10:37** ~ “And Jesus said . . . , ‘You go, and do likewise.’”

## Conclusion

➤ Christians are commanded to love – with a godly, pure, selfless, sacrificial, Christ-honoring and God-glorifying love. This is no mere emotion or sentimentality; this is not an empty profession or just religious doctrine; this is not a love that comes from the world, or is seen in the world, but a love that comes from God and a love that is seen in those who truly belong to God – those who have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. For what Christ has done for them, is evident in how they live for Him!

✓ Illust: “Beware of self-deception in this matter. It is easy to imagine what you would do to win or help a brother; and you may please yourselves by carrying the imagination to any length you choose. If a great act of self-sacrifice would avail, you would not shrink from it. But what if you grudge some far readier and easier service, a gift to the needy out of your abundance, or a visit of sympathy to the widow out of your leisure, or a word in season to the weary out of the fullness of your own happier experience, or a helping hand to snatch a perishing soul from the pit and set him on the rock on which the Lord has set you? You will lay down your life for one who is, or whom may be a brother! And yet you cannot lay down for him your love of this world’s goods; your love of ease and selfish comfort; your fastidious [delicate, finicky, squeamish] taste, that shrinks from contact with squalid [filthy, sordid, immoral] wretchedness and vulgar ways; your proud or shy reserve, that keeps the humble at a distance; your false shame that sends you in upon yourself when you should be sowing beside all waters” (A.W. Pink; *Exposition of 1 John*; 3:17-21).

**John 13:34** ~ “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

**John 15:12** ~ “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”