

## ***“Love in Practice”*** ***1 John 3:17-24***

INTRO:

The Apostle John has taught us the importance of loving our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Last time he underlined the nature of true love. It is a command we must obey first and then emotion follows. It can mean that others will hate us even if we love. Our genuine love for our brothers and sisters in the Lord assures us we know Christ.

In this paragraph, John made two more statements about love. First, love is more than a statement, it is action. Second, John counsels us in our response to this truth.

***I. Love means Action (v. 17-18)***

***II. How do We Love? (v. 19-24)***

***I. Love means Action (v. 17-18)***

A. We left our study last time with John’s words ringing in our ears,

***“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.” (1 John 3:16)***

We know that Christ loves us because the Lord Jesus did something to show us His love. He laid down His life to meet our greatest need. In the same way, we must do more than just say we love our brothers and sisters in Christ. (1 John 3:17-18)

***“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue [alone], but in deed and in truth.”***

B. John is not talking about some general ministry to poor people in the world. He is talking about family ministry to a brother or sister in the Lord. Does each of us individually tangibly care for folks who belong to the Lord Jesus in this local assembly?

1. It is very easy to see this simply as money, food, or clothes. Are we also helping them with spiritual and emotional needs? Do we pray for one another? Do we encourage and exhort one another?

2. One very important ministry we can have is as an accountability partner or as a prayer partner. We must help other believers physically, but we also must help in other ways. Loving in word is wrong, if our love is just words. It needs to love in action and love in truth.

## *II. How do We Love? (v. 19-24)*

A. John wants us to understand plainly that if we love our brothers and sisters in the Lord it shows we are His. (1 John 3:19)

***“And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.”***

B. What do we do if we are having trouble loving our brothers like this? Are we unsaved? Maybe we are. What do we do if we want to love our brothers and sisters in the Lord? John tells us in v.20.

***“For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.”***

We should seek the help of God who is greater than our hearts who judge us and knows what really is going on inside of us. John implies that God will help us love in the way he described to us.

C. The Apostle turns the coin over in vs.21-22.

***“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”***

Three things result from our proper love toward our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

1. First, we have great confidence toward God. Assurance that we belong to Him, that we know that we know, comes because we know we love as God commands us.
2. Second, we know He will answer our prayers. Many tell us that there are secrets to get God to do what we want and to answer prayer the way we want Him to answer. Yet, the truth is, we know He will answer only when what we ask is what He wills. God delights in doing for His obedient children.
3. Finally, we can please Him. We can do what is pleasing in His sight. We know from other scriptures that this is not just external obedience. This is submission from the heart. God is pleased because we want to obey Him because we love Him.

D. This proper obedience is defined for us. (1 John 3:23-24)

***“And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.”***

This obedience is not teaching “works salvation” nor is it legalism.

1. John carefully defined for us what he wrote about here. The first commandment is faith. While works do not save us, faith in the Lord Jesus does save. God did not say we could believe if we wanted to, but it really wasn't important. He told us we must believe

if we are to be saved. Remember the Philippian jailer? Paul did not say, “It is possible if you believe on the Lord Jesus you might be saved.” No, he uttered a command, **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” (Acts 16:31)** When we respond in faith, we are obeying God’s command. We do not merit salvation, but we believe and receive it.

2. A second command we obey is to love one another. We obey by choosing to love and to do it because God wants us to love like this. This again cannot be just outward obedience. This kind of love comes from a heart that is Christ’s home.

**E. “Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.” (1 John 3:24)**

1. We meet one of John’s favorite words again here. Remember the word *“abide?”* The evidence that we are abiding in Him is that we desire to keep His commandments. Our submission to God is evidence of our relationship with God. We do not ultimately obey God for what we can get out of Him, but because we want to obey because we love Him.

2. We know that we belong to Him because we have the Spirit of God living in us. How do we know that we have the Holy Spirit living in us? John is going to tell us in detail in the next chapter some evidences that show that the Spirit of God lives in us.

3. But in this chapter, one of the great evidences of the indwelling Holy Spirit is that He compels us to love our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

F. How deep is our love? Is our love for the Lord so great that we desire to please Him by loving our brothers and sisters in the Lord?

Do we have assurance before God that we belong to Him and that He will hear and answer our prayers? Have we obeyed in believing? Have we also obeyed in loving as we should?