

Text: 1 John 3:14-24

Section 1

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. (1 John 3:14-15)

Love, particularly love for one another as fellow Christians, is identified here as a mark of the true believer. As we've read repeatedly elsewhere, love is the first "fruit" listed among the **fruit of the Spirit** in Galatians 5.

22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

That murder is evil and sinful should be obvious, its prohibition is among the Ten Commandments.

13''You shall not murder. 14''You shall not commit adultery. (Exodus 20:13-14)

John here and our Lord Jesus previously applied the command forbidding murder not only to the act of murder itself, but also to the sinful and hateful attitude that precedes it. In short, hatred is tantamount to murder, and an indication that one is indeed unsaved.

21''You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' 22''But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. (Matthew 5:21-22)

By the way, murder is not the only sin for which our Lord identified the thought as being equal to the act itself.

27''You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY';28but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:27-28)

Just as those who demonstrate **love** and the rest of the **fruit of the Spirit** will inherit eternal life, those lacking these fruits, and therefore the Spirit, remain in their sins, and destined for eternal condemnation.

19Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

8''But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelations 21:8)

Section 2

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. (1 John 3:16-18)

"Love" in the Bible is very rarely the transient emotion with which we often identify that term today. It is instead defined by action. If I say I love my fellow Christians, and yet do nothing to meet their physical and/or spiritual needs, I am, according to the Scriptures, lying. Jesus identified no greater love than to **lay down his life for his friends**. I do not think it is "stretching" to say that this refers not only to dying to somehow protect another (though He certainly did this much and more!), but also that we unhesitatingly give of those things we have that are needful for life—food, clothing, shelter—in order to meet the needs of others, particularly our fellow believers.

12''This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. 13''Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14''You are My friends if you do what I command you. (John 15:12-14)

That said, please do not think that material wealth is a sinful thing to be shunned by more “spiritual” people. God gave Solomon great wealth as a reward for requesting wisdom over wealth. Wealth can be sinful if it is made into an idol, but it is not necessarily sinful.

11God said to Solomon, "Because you had this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself wisdom and knowledge that you may rule My people over whom I have made you king, **12**wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you. And I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed nor those who will come after you." (2 Chronicles 1:11-12)

James offered similar instruction to today’s passage in his admonitions about faith and works. Our works demonstrate who we are—either saved or unsaved. If you do not have the works and fruits that the Bible identifies as commensurate with regeneration, then you have reason to doubt your salvation. Even Satan’s demons have an action-less, fruitless “belief” in God, yet they will spend eternity in Hell.

14What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? **15**If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, **16**and 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?**17**Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. **18**But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." **19**You believe that God is one You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. (James 2:14-19)

This passage in 1 John specifically addresses our love for fellow believers, and rightly so—we as believers should be a community of faith, not just a smattering of people that gather in the same building a few times a week to “do religion.” However, our loving deeds should not be limited to those in the Body of Christ—the Lord commanded us to love (with action) even those that are, by most standards, foreign to us.

30Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. **31**"And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. **32**"Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. **33**"But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, **34**and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. **35**"On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' **36**"Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" **37**And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same." (Luke 10:30-37)

Section 3

*19*We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him *20*in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. *21*Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; *22*and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. (1 John 3:19-22)

Love for our fellow believers is, again, an indication that we are truly saved. The Scriptures teach that we as God’s People are **one body**—therefore discord among believers is an indicator of great sickness, spiritually speaking.

4For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, **5**so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (Romans 12:4-5)

Our Lord Jesus promised to save everyone that calls upon Him in repentance and faith.

24"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (John 5:24)

As we’ve already studied in 1 John, when we as believers do sin—when *our heart condemns us*—we can confidently and reverently approach the Throne of Grace to confess our sins and receive forgiveness.

9If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10**If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. **1**My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; (1 John 1:9-2:1)

When we are cleansed of sin and walk in obedience to the Lord we can pray confidently, expecting to receive those things for which we ask.

22" And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." (Matthew 21:22)

Let me reiterate, though, that answers to prayer—as well as perseverance in the faith—are tied in the Scriptures to obedience. Both are presented as “if-then” propositions.

7" If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8" My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. 9" Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10" If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (John 15:7-10)

Because affirmative answers to prayer are linked to obedience, and because we know that the faith we exercise to be saved and to do anything else is not from ourselves but from God, it is impossible that anyone will be able to exercise enough “faith” or “belief” to pray for and receive anything sinful or otherwise contrary to the Word of God.

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Again, faith is given to us by God—it does not come from within ourselves only. I am personally encouraged in this by the following passage in which a father, desperate for the Lord Jesus to heal his demon-possessed son, cries “**I do believe; help my unbelief.**” It is encouraging because we then see that the Lord honored this plea. How often then should we, when our faith is lacking, cry out to God to “help our unbelief!”

20 They brought the boy to Him. When he saw Him, immediately the spirit threw him into a convulsion, and falling to the ground, he began rolling around and foaming at the mouth. 21 And He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. 22" It has often thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" 23 And Jesus said to him, " 'If You can?' All things are possible to him who believes." 24 Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief." 25 When Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You deaf and mute spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again." 26 After crying out and throwing him into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, "He is dead!" 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up. (Mark 9:20-27)

Section 4

23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us. (1 John 3:23-24)

Those that believe in the Lord Jesus are saved. Paul and Silas presented the Gospel to the jailer in such simple terms.

29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:29-31)

But you may ask, but what about repentance and obedience? You talk every week against “easy-believism” and emphasize the need for repentance and faith to be saved, and obedience to persevere. Is it as simple as just believing? Yes, if you believe correctly. Read Paul and Silas’s command again: **Believe in the Lord Jesus**. It is not enough to believe that Jesus exists, or that He died, or even that He is the Son of God. We must believe that He is Lord, that is, Master, and confess Him as such.

9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; 13 for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." (Romans 10:9-13)

If Jesus is our Master, we will obey Him. If we obey Him, we will persevere in the faith until the end.

9" Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 10" If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (John 15:9-10)

John tells us in verse 24 that the presence of the Holy Spirit within us is evidence of His abiding in us, and this is true. However, let me caution you in this. There are lots of "spirits" in the world, but only one Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Godhead. I have seen, and I'm sure you have too, lots of people claiming to act under the influence of the Holy Spirit, yet doing things that, as we've read today, are totally contrary to the behaviors of regenerate people. To be aware of the Holy Spirit's presence in one's life is a special and incomparable blessing, but make sure that the "spirit" you perceive is indeed the Holy Spirit. How do we tell? The Holy Spirit will never prompt us to do or say anything that is contrary to the Gospel as presented in Scripture.

1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. (1 John 4:1-3)

Know God's Word. Study It and do what It says. When we do, we know that we are indeed Christians, saved by the Blood of Jesus Christ, and that we can expect the fellowship and enabling of the Holy Spirit as we endeavor to serve Him and lead others to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.