

The Epistles of John

Week 34: 1 John 3:11-24

The NT puts the emphasis on the positive benefits of the character of God that should be emulated in us.

God is light, and we should be the light of the world.

God is life, we should be life-giving, not death-dealing.

God is love, and we should be loving—not only each other, but even our enemies as well.

Ben Witherington III

1 John 3:11-24

1 John 3:11-15 (ESV)

11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

12 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.

13 Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you.

14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.

15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

1 John 3:11-24

There are many adjectives predicated of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, including that they are righteous, that they are pure, and they're holy, and they're just, and all of that. But there are only three major nouns that are used to describe God. God is light. God is life. And God is love.

God is light, and in Him is no darkness. That was mentioned in the beginning of 1 John. God is life—He has inherent everlasting life within Him, eternal life within Him. He is not merely the source of life, He radiates life; He embodies life. God is light. God is life. And God is love.

1 John 3:11-24

The picture of God in this document, and really throughout the NT, is that God is holy love. Not holiness without love, thank goodness, or no one could stand. But also not love without holiness. Not some kind of indulgent love that doesn't care about justice, that doesn't care about righteousness, that doesn't care about holiness.

The noun is "love." The adjective is "righteous" or "holy," and we need to keep that in mind.

1 John 3:11-24

The word behind murdered speaks of intense violence. In the NT it is found only in this letter and Revelation

Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering. — Yoda

“and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.” It does not require searching inquiry or research to confirm this fact. It is self-evident. The one who is governed by a spirit of hate does not possess eternal life. This does not mean that the murderer cannot be transferred from the sphere of death to the realm of eternal life. Indeed, forgiveness is available to all who repent, including those who murder.

1 John 3:11-24

1 John 3:16–18 (ESV)

16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

17 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?

18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

1 John 3:11-24

It should be noted that the laying down of life is done for the benefit of the other person.

The essence of love, biblically speaking, is self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice. We ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. That's the ultimate expression of love, as it was in the life of Jesus Himself.

John's point is that Christians have an obligation to follow the example of their Lord even unto death if such an occasion presents itself.

1 John 3:11-24

The way of (eternal) life is the way of love. Love's absence testifies to death's dominance. This is not a very subtle point in theory, but experience suggests that it is a truth easily overlooked in any given community at any given time.

Love for others may be considered easy in affluent Western settings where insulation from them is possible. But Seneca, writing approximately AD 50, is more realistic and honest. He frankly points out how "hatred of the human race seizes us" because of the corruption and foolishness we see on every hand.

1 John 3:11-24

Handout

1 John 3:11-24

1 John 3:19-24 (ESV)

19 By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him;

20 for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.

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 what pleases him.

23 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.

24 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.

1 John 3:11-24

If we are practicing the gospel of justice and mercy, of love and compassion. If we are practicing it, it reaffirms our knowledge of who we actually are. We know who we are and whose we are by what we do.

The term “confidence” (parrēsian) means “boldness,” “a freedom of speech,” and “a frankness such as that a child has in approaching his father.”

“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:16 NIV)

1 John 3:11-24

The expression ‘in the name of’ was an idiomatic statement in the ancient world. It was shorthand for a person’s character and authority.

Fundamentally, there is only one comprehensive command conveyed in a dual form: an explicit belief in the Son, Jesus Christ, and an active love for one another. The two parallel verbs “believe” (pisteusōmen) and “love” (agapōmen) work together to form one primary command.

Many in our world would have us believe that all that is necessary to be a good Christian is to just be filled with love for one another, but this is not what John is saying here or elsewhere. The love must be coupled with faith in Jesus Christ.

Application for This Week

The noun is “love.” The adjective is “righteous” or “holy”

The essence of love, biblically speaking, is self-sacrifice.

We know who we are and whose we are by what we do.

Love must be coupled with faith in Jesus Christ.

We *know* that He abides in us by the Spirit He has given us, that anointing which Jesus promised.

Homework

My blog with past lessons is:

www.UnapologeticallyJohn.com

Thank you for coming!

See you back next week