



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

1 JOHN 4:12, 1 JOHN 3:16 - "THE CALL TO LOVE!"

COLORADO MAY 25, 2021

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John stresses the believers' command to love as a test to reveal genuine faith. This is not anything new. John refers to the teachings of Christ Himself. John 13:34-35, says that love should mark the lives of believers and Christ was our example. In John's Gospel, the commandment to love was Christ's commandment to His disciples and all who would follow.

The supreme motivation for godly living lies in believers grasping the wonder of God's love for us! That's why John has spent so much time on this truth. The sheer, undeserved grace and kindness of God's love for us should inspire us to "love one another".¹

I. 1 JOHN 4:7-12, 1 JOHN 3:16 - "THE CALL TO LOVE!"

*(7) "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." (8) "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." (9) "By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him." (10) "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (11) "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." (12) "No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us."
1 John 4:7-12*

"We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John 3:16

Our new birth in Jesus Christ gives us a new life through salvation in Him alone. This salvation changes and transforms our sinful attitudes into loving ones that demonstrate genuine faith.² (Colossians 2:11) Christ's atonement on the cross lifts us up to new life in Christ for all who believe in Him.

Only by believing in Jesus are we born again to new life. And John tells us that all those with this new life will be characterized by the love of Jesus Christ when "He laid down His life for us." (1 John 3:16)

The practice of love demonstrates that God does abide, does dwell in us as 1 John 4:12 says. Genuine believers are born again. When believers practice Godly love, God becomes visible in the lives of those in Whom He dwells. Love visibly expressed to others confirms the reality of God's indwelling presence and genuine salvation. The practice of love is the determinative test for all who claim to be a Christian. The absence of love reveals the inner state of the heart. To walk as Jesus walked in love for God and others is not a condition for our salvation but it is a sign of it.

The unseen God reveals Himself through the visible love of believers. Although God cannot be seen, John is making the point that the Almighty, Self-Existent One can be seen in those whom He abides and in whom His love is lived out.³

A. "WE KNOW LOVE BY THIS..." - 1 JOHN 3:16

"We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John 3:16

Here in this verse, John points to the supreme revelation of love in the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ. He defines love by His life and indicates how believers are obligated to practice love as well.

What is the true criteria of love? How can we understand what real love is? There is a lot said about love these days, so what does John mean by love?

John brings us to the supreme example of love found only in Jesus Christ. "We know love by this", refers to a knowledge gained by diligent contemplation. We can understand this love for in Christ we possess the supreme manifestation of it. John says, "that He laid down His life for us."

The love John speaks of can't be understood apart from that historical event; Christ's sacrifice for us on the cross. It is by the cross that the greatest of all love, agape love, is revealed fully.⁴

"For us" Jesus Christ became our sin bearing sacrifice. "For us" He experienced the God forsakenness of the cross that we might be rescued from hell and reconciled to God. And the love John speaks of can't be understood apart from this event. It is by the cross that the greatest of all love, agape love, is demonstrated fully.

"laid down" Greek "**etheken**" aorist active verb denoting a deliberate, voluntary act

This verb expresses a love that is willing to sacrifice self on behalf of others. Christ was not killed as a martyr, but He willingly, as an act of His own will, gave Himself "for us". He acted in the interest of others and not Himself. Christ gave the greatest possible expression of love for others by His death on the cross. Christ's love was not mere sentiment or emotion. No His love was expressed by what He did. He "laid down His life for us".

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, GOVERNOR & SPOUSES: TUESDAY AT 7:15AM, CAPITOL BASEMENT, ROOM 0109

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Therefore, John says, “*we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*” John immediately links Christ’s example of self-sacrificing love to that of the believer.

“*we ought*”- not just a must, but rather refers to a continuing obligation..

John emphasizes the same obligation here in 1 John 3:16 to love as we saw in 1 John 4:12. All believers have a continuing obligation to the likeness of Christ, to that same kind of love. And the extent to which a believer’s love should be willing to go is that we would be willing to lay down our life. Loving our brother and sister as Christ loved us could mean that we make the ultimate sacrifice to secure their good. Though this would be rare, we can’t overlook this idea of self-sacrifice too quickly. We may not have to die for others, but we may need to die to our self or sacrifice our own interests for others.⁵

Our world encourages self-satisfaction and not sacrifice. But this is the standard of love that we are obligated to give of

ourselves as Christ did. This is what love really is. And this is our continuing obligation to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The call here is this kind of love expressed to our brothers and sisters in Christ specifically. Where that love is failing, our greatest need is not so much to be exhorted to love, but to be reacquainted with the Savior’s selfless sacrifice for sinners...for us.⁶

Has God’s love so captured our hearts that we make His pleasure the all-absorbing interest of our lives?

Real love for God will be demonstrated by doing His will. The practice of Godly love gives evidence of genuine saving faith. Do we give evidence of saving faith by how we live and love?

Do we love like this? Are we willing to show that love at any cost?

¹ Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 60.

² MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg. 133.

³ Boice, James Montgomery, *An Expository Commentary: The Epistles of John*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1979. Pg. 116.

⁴ Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 44.

⁵ Boice, James Montgomery, *An Expository Commentary: The Epistles of John*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1979. Pg. 96.

⁶ Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 45.