



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

1 JOHN 3:17-18 – THE CALL TO LOVE: PART 2

WYOMING

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Is it possible for a Christian believer truly to be a believer while refusing to love someone who God loves and for whom Christ died? Saving faith brings us into union with Jesus Christ, the God Who is love. Likeness is the evidence of belonging. This is something we must ponder often. For the one who does not love cannot be assured he or she is of the family of God.¹

I. 1 JOHN 3:17-18 – THE CALL TO LOVE: PART 2

(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. (17) But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? (18) Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."

1 John 3:16-18

All believers have a continuing obligation to the same kind of love as Jesus Christ. And the extent to which our love would be willing to go must be the same lengths that Christ was willing to love us. 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.²

Our world encourages self-satisfaction and not sacrifice. But a heart willing to sacrifice on behalf of our brothers and sisters in Christ is the standard of love that we are obligated to give. That's what love really is. And this is our continuing obligation to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

A. THE LACK OF LOVE- 1 JOHN 3:17

"But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?"

1 John 3:17

John has shown what the presence or absence of love reveals; whether we are children of God or children of the devil. Then in 1 John 3:16, John points to the supreme revelation of love found in the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ and indicates how the obligation of every believer is to practice this love as well.

Now in 1 John 3:17, he gives us an illustration of the lack of love. John writes, *"But whoever has the world's goods"*, referring to one who possesses enough material means to live. John isn't just referring to someone who is wealthy, but anyone who has the means to help another.

John goes on to say, *"and beholds his brother in need"*. *"Beholds"* is not a casual glance but a careful observing and contemplating on the situation. *"His brother in need"* refers to a Christian brother or sister who has a need. There is a need and the other has the means to meet that need.

Then John writes, *"and closes his heart against him..."*. So there is a need and there is a call to a sympathetic action to meet that need, but, instead this one refrains from meeting that need. He shuts out any consideration for the needs of the brother or sister. *"Closes"* means to literally close or lock a gate, a gate to his heart and does not let love flow and meet this need. This one is literally turning his back on his brother or sister who is in need.³

If believers truly are in God's family, then how can we close our hearts and deprive anyone in our family of basic needs? Christian love shares with the needy.

Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 4:7 that everything we have received is a gift from God. Earthly goods are to be shared with others in need.⁴ If we truly love one another, how can we lock our hearts to compassion for others? (James 2:15, 16)

John asks, *"how does the love of God abide in him?"* If our loving commitment to our brothers and sisters is less than it should be, it can only mean that we have lost sight of the cross. Love gives and gives sacrificially as Christ gave. (Ephesians 5:25)

The gospel summons us to share our time, our friendship, our possessions and more with our needy brothers and sisters. Christ constantly gave of Himself to others in need. (Matthew 9:35-36) It is Christ's selfless sacrifice for us that shapes and inspires us in the practice of love for others.

John makes it clear that the practice of love in our lives is a sure indication of our salvation. (1 John 3:14-15) A person may claim to be filled with God's love but it is mere words if we cannot meet tangible needs.

John challenges us to render a verdict on ourselves as to whether the love of God abides in us. He asks a rhetorical question and rejects the claim that anyone who closes his heart against his brother or sister in Christ, could possibly have the love of God abiding in him. In Matthew 22:35-40, Jesus calls us to love God and love our neighbor as ourselves. To say that we love God and yet refuse to give that love towards another

BIBLE STUDIES

WYOMING HOUSE AND SENATE, GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, SPOUSES, STAFF & LSO: WEDNESDAY AT 6:30AM, WYOMING CAPITOL, HERSHLER BUILDING, CAPITOL EXTENSION CONFERENCE CENTER, ROOM W052

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unfortunate brother or sister discredits our claim and that's hypocrisy.⁵

B. THE CALL TO PRACTICE TRUE LOVE - 1 JOHN 3:18

"Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." 1 John 3:18

John wants us to know that Christian love is not words that just sound good. No, these are words that must cause us to search ourselves deeply. John reminds us that our love is not mere words alone. As important as words can be, John says here. *"let us not love with word or with tongue..."*

The proof of genuine love will be revealed by deeds and actions. Here John lovingly appeals to his readers, encouraging them to give express to the love implanted in their hearts as a result of their salvation in Jesus Christ. John says, *"let us"*, and includes himself in his call to practice agape love.

Then John offers two negative expressions: *"not...with word"* and *"not...with tongue"*. By love's nature, it demands an active expression instead of just words. Love is an action. Christ's expression of His love was shown on the cross. And then John says that how we convey our love can't just be with our tongue, or limited to just verbal expression. (James 2:15-16)

But John writes, *"but in deed and truth."* Deeds will always back up our words. They give action to what we say. And so love must be expressed in outward beneficial actions towards another. Christians will demonstrate a real love for one

another and John is specifically pointing towards fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

And John is careful to mention that we are also called to love in *"truth"*. What does John mean by truth? Could it be that our love would be done for some show or hypocritical purpose? When we love in deed and in truth, it is not for an outward show rather it is an outward demonstration of selfless love with no selfish motive of show...which can easily happen.

An action of true Christ like love will be without any motive for self with no show or hypocrisy. If that is the case, it really wasn't for our brother or sister but for ourselves to look good to others. We must be ever so careful about our motives. It can't be to look good to others. Real love gives as Christ, with no motive for Himself. He gave Himself selflessly for us and that's real love.

Christians will demonstrate a real love for one another, and John is specifically pointing to fellow believers. Could it be these are the ones we find hardest to really love?

And why are we called to this love for one another? Paul said because the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts! (Romans 12:10-13, Galatians 6:10) We love because Christ first loved us.

¹ Hamilton, Ian, *Let's Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 47.

² Boice, James Montgomery, *An Expository Commentary: The Epistles of John*. Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1979. Pg. 96.

³ Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Bob Jones University Press: Greenville, SC, 1991. Pg. 162.

⁴ Hamilton, Ian, *Let's Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 45.

⁵ Hamilton, Ian, *Let's Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg. 45.