

# Confident Love

1 John 3:11-24

SS Lesson for 11/15/2020

**Devotional Scripture:** 1 Cor 13:1-13

## OUTLINE

### LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

*Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

*Key Verse: 1 John 3:24*

*Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary*

### MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

#### CONFIDENT IN SUPPORTIVE LOVE (1 JOHN 3:11-15)

*Supportive love despite unloving relationships (11-12)*

Love despite unloving relationships by praying for your enemies (Matt 5:43-47)

Love despite unloving relationships by feeding your enemies (Prov 25:21-22)

Love despite unloving relationships by blessing those who persecute you (Rom 12:14)

Love despite unloving relationships by loving versus being rude, self-seeking and easily angered (1 Cor 13:5)

Love despite unloving relationships by loving and bless instead of revenge (1 Peter 3:9)

*Supportive love despite of the world's hatred (13)*

Love in spite of the world hatred because the world hated Jesus (Matt 10:22)

Love in spite of the world hatred because great is our reward in heaven for being insulted and rejected because of our faith (Luke 6:22-23)

Love in spite of the world hatred because we don't belong to the world (John 15:18-19)

Love in spite of the world hatred because through Jesus we can overcome the world (John 16:33)

Love in spite of the world hatred because we have been given God's word (John 17:14-16)

Love in spite of the world hatred because Christians should try to live a godly life (2 Tim 3:12)

*Supportive love that leads from death to life (14-15)*

From death to life because of hearing God's word (John 5:24)

From death to life because of God's love and grace (Eph 2:4-5)

From death to life because of loving one another (1 John 2:9-11)

From death to life because of belief in Jesus (John 3:36)

From death to life because of being rescueded by Jesus (Col 1:12-14)

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Example of how to love enough to give life (John 15:12-14)

Example of risking life for others (Rom 16:3-4)

Example of willing to die for God's work (Phil 2:28-30)

Example of walking as Jesus did and love being complete in Him (1 John 2:5-6)

Example of being willing to deny self and lose life (Mark 8:34-35)

Example of willing to die for those who are not righteous (Rom 5:7-8)

*Sacrificial love that helps those in need (17)*

Helping those in need by being kind to the poor (Prov 19:17)

Helping those in need by sharing resources (Isa 58:6-7)

Helping those in need by supplying their needs out of our abundance (2 Cor 8:14-15)

Helping those in need by generously sharing (1 Tim 6:18)

Helping those in need by not forgetting to do good and sharing (Heb 13:16)

Helping those in need by supporting the helpless (James 1:27)

*Sacrificial love that is accompanied by action (18)*

Love accompanied by action through responding to daily opportunities (Matt 25:41-43)

Love accompanied by action through providing physical needs versus just wishing them well (James 2:14-17)

Love accompanied by action through putting God's word into practice (Luke 6:47-49)

Love accompanied by action through not just being hearing of the word, but doers (Ezek 33:30-32)

Love accompanied by action through being obedient (Matt 21:28-31)

#### CONFIDENT IN SINCERE LOVE (1 JOHN 3:19-24)

*Sincere love that results in confidence toward God (19-21)*

Confidence toward God because God will be the judge (1 Cor 4:4-5)

Confidence toward God because of having Jesus as our High Priest (Heb 4:15-16)

Confidence toward God because of being cleansed by God (Heb 10:22)

Confidence toward God by continuously being in Jesus (1 John 2:28)

- Confidence toward God because believing in the Name of Jesus (1 John 5:13-15)
- Sincere love that is in obedience to God's commandments (22-23)*
- Obedience to God's commandments by remaining in Jesus' love (John 15:10)
- Obedience to God's commandments by loving Jesus (John 14:15)
- Obedience to God's commandments to obtain loving communion with God (John 14:23-24)
- Obedience to God's commandments by offering ourselves as God's slave (Rom 6:16)
- Obedience to God's commandments to show love for God (1 John 5:3)
- Obedience to God's commandments by walking in obedient love (2 John 6)

## CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

COMMENTARY THOUGHTS FROM THOMAS CONSTABLE  
 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE NIV STANDARD LESSON COMMENTARY  
 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS FROM THE ECHOES COMMENTARY

## Lesson Background and Key Verse

### Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Blogger Carey Nieuwhof has written that non-Christians hate Christians because they think they are judgmental, hypocritical, and insincere friends. But history tells the stories of many Christians who were none of these things. We can find many examples in our churches today of Christians who refuse to be judgmental, whose lives are not hypocritical, and whose friendships are sincere both with believers and nonbelievers. Still, some of these exemplary folks suffer persecution, even death. There must be a deeper dynamic here. Most Christians have plenty of room to be more Christlike in our relationships with non-Christians. But nothing we do will earn the world's love. This was also true for John's readers. What is to be done in a seemingly no-win situation?

The three letters of John were likely written about the same time as the Gospel of John, in the AD 80s or 90s. The letters reflect a personal relationship with the readers, like a pastor writing to his flock. Indeed, early Christian sources indicate that the apostle John left Jerusalem and his home region of Galilee to settle in the city of Ephesus. Paul had founded the church of Ephesus in the mid-50s on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1-22). The city had become a center of Christian activity, and this was strengthened by the arrival of John 15 to 20 years after Paul. At the time of the writing of 1 John, the apostle had served as a pastor for the Ephesians for more than a decade. John wrote as the senior statesman of the church, likely the last living of the 12 original apostles. First John contains a wide range of topics that summarize the aged apostle's teachings and advice for his beloved "children," the Christians of Ephesus. The letters of John deal with factions within and outside the church of Ephesus, which had begun to teach many false things (examples: 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3). Included in this list were things like the denial of the true humanity of Christ (and therefore his atoning death), of the reality of sin in the lives of the teachers, and of the assurance of salvation for believers as taught by Jesus. John wrote this epistle against a background of false teachers who came to be known as gnostics. Among other things, gnostics taught that it did not really matter if a person had morality or love—as long as he or she had "secret knowledge." To combat this false teaching, John emphasized the interconnection of right belief, right actions, and right love. To put it another way, it is the right involvement of head, hands, and heart. The child of God must believe the truth, obey the commands, and love brothers and sisters in Christ. John showed that such threats to the faith must be dealt with firmly and without compromise, yet with a spirit of love. Christians cannot return hate and abuse with more hate and abuse. Even in the most contentious relationships, love must prevail. Surely this applied to John himself, whose teachings were under attack by these heretics. His original readers may have witnessed firsthand his response to his antagonists, and if this had been anything but love, the message of 1 John would have a hollow ring. John demonstrated that if we are in the right and "walk in [the truth]" (3 John 3), we can bring great confidence to our relationship with anyone. This is not arrogance or elitism, but inner strength that does not depend on the approval of others for personal well-being.

### Key Verse: 1 John 3:24

*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.*

### Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

**3:11-12.** John here made it plain that his admonitions were directed to Christians. **This is the message you (Christians) have heard from the beginning: We (Christians) should love one another.** But before telling

his audience precisely what love is, he first told them what it is not. It is most certainly **not** the kind of action **Cain** exhibited toward **his brother** Abel. Cain **murdered** his brother (Gen. 4:8) and in that action he was of **the evil one** (*ek tou ponērou*; **belonged to** is misleading). The reason for this murder was Cain's jealous resentment of his brother's superior righteousness (Gen. 4:2-7). In saying this, John touched a sensitive nerve, since hatred toward another Christian is often prompted by a feeling of guilt about one's **own** life as compared with that person's. It is well to remember that such reactions are satanic, as John bluntly affirmed here.

**3:13.** Such reactions of hatred and murder (vv. 11-12) are also worldly, since **the world hates** Christians. That fact should **not** surprise the readers (called **brothers** only here in 1 John) at all, however. What else can the world be expected to do? It is hatred among believers that is so abnormal, and against which John was fundamentally warning. In that sense it is right to treat this verse as more or less parenthetical.

**3:14.** In contrast with the world, however, John stated, **We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers.** The first "we" of this statement is quite emphatic in the original and may mean "we, the apostles." But even if it does, the writer no doubt intended that the readers apply this comment to themselves. Love for one's brothers is evidence that he has entered God's sphere of life (cf. John 13:35). The expression translated "passed from death to life" occurs elsewhere only in John 5:24 (there trans. "crossed over from death to life") where it refers to conversion. But a phrase which is used only twice in John's writing can hardly be said to have a fixed meaning. The context here must decide its significance. The statements of 1 John 3:14b-15 suggest that the spheres of "death" and "life" are here treated as experiential and determined by one's actions. If so, the issue of conversion is not in view here. The statement, **Anyone who does not love** (the majority of the mss. add "a brother" or "his brother") **remains in death**, is considered under verse 15.

**3:15.** This verse is usually taken to mean that a true Christian cannot hate his fellow Christian, since hatred is the moral equivalent of murder. But this view cannot stand up under close scrutiny. To begin with, John speaks of **anyone who hates his brother.** If John had believed that only an unsaved person can hate another Christian, the word "his" unnecessarily personalizes the relationship (cf. 2:9). But it is an illusion to believe that a real Christian is incapable of hatred and murder. David was guilty of the murder of pious Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. 12:9) and Peter warned his Christian readers, "If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer" (1 Peter 4:15; more lit., "Let none of you suffer as a murderer"). The view that 1 John 3:15 cannot refer to the saved is totally devoid of all realism. The solemn fact remains that hatred of some other believer is the spiritual equivalent of murder (Matt. 5:21-22), as a lustful eye is the spiritual equivalent of adultery (Matt. 5:28). John insisted then that **no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.** The NIV does not translate the Greek participle *menousan* ("abiding"), which is a crucial word here. John does *not* say that someone who hates his brother does not *possess* eternal life, but rather that he does not have it *abiding* in him. But since for John, Christ Himself is eternal life (John 14:6; 1 John 1:2; 5:20), John's statement is saying that no murderer has *Christ* abiding in him. Thus once more the experience of "abiding" is what John had in view. Hatred on the part of one Christian toward another is thus an experience of moral murder. As John had indicated in 3:14b, he held that a Christian who fails to love his brother "remains (*menei*) in death." He is thus experientially living in the same sphere in which the world lives (see v. 13). Because he is a murderer at heart he can make no real claim to the kind of intimate fellowship with God and Christ which the word "abide" suggests. Eternal life (i.e., Christ) is not at home in his heart so long as the spirit of murder is there. Such a person is disastrously out of touch with his Lord and he experiences only death. (Cf. Paul's statement, "For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die" [Rom. 8:13].) John's words were surely grim. But no service is rendered to the church by denying their applicability to believers. The experience of the Christian church through the ages shows how urgently they are needed. Hate, unfortunately, is not confined to unsaved people.

**3:16.** In stark contrast with hatred stands the true character of Christian **love.** So far is it from the spirit of murder that its essence lies in giving one's life for others rather than taking lives. This was exemplified in **Jesus Christ who laid down His life for us.** With this as a model, Christians should be prepared to make similar sacrifices **for their brothers.**

**3:17-18.** Yet the opportunity to sacrifice one's life for another may not arise. But **material possessions** (as food and clothes) help sustain life and, **if** a Christian's love is real, he cannot see **his brother in need** without having **pity on him.** "Pity" (*splanchna*) suggests a deep-seated emotional concern or affectionate sympathy (also used in Luke 1:78; 2 Cor. 6:12; 7:15; Phil. 1:8; 2:1; Phile. 7, 12, 20). The true test of love is not one's verbal profession of it (loving **with words or tongue**) but his willingness to help and thus to **love... with actions and in truth.**

**3:19-20.** The statement, **This then is how we know that we belong to the truth**, probably refers back to verses 17-18. By practical acts of love in which the needs of others are met, Christians can have a basic assurance that they are participating experientially in the truth. (The NIV's "we belong to the truth" paraphrases the Gr. "we are of the truth"; cf. "of God" [v. 10] and "belonged to the evil one" [v. 12].) The rest of verse 19 and all of verse 20 are difficult in the original, but probably should be translated, "And we shall persuade **our hearts** before Him that, if **our hearts condemn us**, God is **greater than our hearts**, and **knows** all things." It is precisely in the sphere of a believer's love for other Christians, in which Christ has set him so high a standard, that he may feel deeply his own inadequacy and failure. But if his heart condemns him, he can remind himself that **God** takes account of those things which at the moment his heart ignores. If he has been engaged in the kind of practical acts of love which John enjoined, his guilt-ridden heart can be persuaded by realizing that God is well aware of his fundamental commitment to the truth. The passage clearly recalls Peter's response to the Lord's final query, "Do you love Me?" Peter replied, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You" (John 21:17).

**3:21-22.** Once a condemning heart has been silenced by resting on God's knowledge of all things, there comes a new **confidence before God**. "Confidence" here translates *parrēsia*, which John had not used since his thematic statement in 2:28 (cf. 4:17; 5:14). The halfway point in his argument had now been reached. As a result of active participation in the truth by real deeds of love, Christians can calm their disapproving **hearts** and achieve boldness in prayer, and their prayers will be answered because they, as believers, are consciously subject to God's will (they **obey His commands** [cf. 2:3] **and do what pleases Him**). This presumes, of course, that the requests themselves are made in subjection to God's will (5:14-15).

**3:23.** The writer had declared that a confident and effective prayer life is founded on obedience to God's "commands" (v. 22). Now those commands are summed up in a single **command** consisting of faith and **love**. The phrase **believe in the name of His Son** contains the epistle's first direct reference to faith. The Greek here contains no word for "in" so the expression could be rendered "believe the name of His Son." In this context it certainly includes the faith in Christ's name which true Christian prayer involves (see John 14:12-15; 16:24). First John 3:23 furnishes a kind of climax to the paragraph beginning in verse 18. As a Christian actively engages in deeds of love (v. 18) and as he achieves boldness before God in prayer (v. 21), he is doing what God commands (cf. 2:3; 3:24; 5:2-3): living a life of confidence in the name of Christ which is undergirded by love (3:23; cf. v. 14; 4:7, 11, 21). Since faith and love, thus conceived, go together, this kind of life is seen as obedience to a single "command." Since the thematic statement of 2:28, John's argument has passed through two stages: (1) the one born of God is manifested only through righteousness (2:29-3:10a), and (2) this righteousness takes the form of a Christlike love for the brethren that leads to boldness in prayer (3:10b-23). Now John showed that this kind of life is the manifestation of the indwelling God.

**3:24.** Two new themes appear in this verse. The first theme is the epistle's first reference to God, or Christ, abiding in each obedient believer. **Those who obey His commands** (cf. 2:3; 3:23; 5:2-3) **live** (*menei*, "abide") **in Him, and He in them**. That the abiding life involves this mutuality is made plain in the Parable of the Vine and the Branches (John 15:4-5, 7). The second new idea is the epistle's first of six explicit references to the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 John 4:2, 6, 13; 5:6, 8; cf. "the Holy One" in 2:20). The way a believer can verify that God **lives** (*menei*, "abides") **in him** is **by the** operation of God's **Spirit** in his life. John then showed that God's Spirit is the Spirit of both faith (4:1-6) and love (4:7-16)—the two aspects of the two-part "command" given in 3:23.

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **Confident in Supportive Love (1 John 3:11-15)**

- 11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,  
12 not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.  
13 Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.  
14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.  
15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

### **Supportive love despite unloving relationships (11-12)**

*Love despite unloving relationships by praying for your enemies (Matt 5:43-47)*

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

*Love despite unloving relationships by feeding your enemies (Prov 25:21-22)*

21 If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. 22 In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.

*Love despite unloving relationships by blessing those who persecute you (Rom 12:14)*

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

*Love despite unloving relationships by loving versus being rude, self-seeking and easily angered (1 Cor 13:5)*

5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

*Love despite unloving relationships by loving and bless instead of revenge (1 Peter 3:9)*

9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

### **Supportive love despite of the world's hatred (13)**

*Love in spite of the world hatred because the world hated Jesus (Matt 10:22)*

22 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

*Love in spite of the world hatred because great is our reward in heaven for being insulted and rejected because of our faith (Luke 6:22-23)*

22 Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. 23 "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.

*Love in spite of the world hatred because we don't belong to the world (John 15:18-19)*

18 "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

*Love in spite of the world hatred because through Jesus we can overcome the world (John 16:33)*

33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

*Love in spite of the world hatred because we have been given God's word (John 17:14-16)*

14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

*Love in spite of the world hatred because Christians should try to live a godly life (2 Tim 3:12)*

12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

### **Supportive love that leads from death to life (14-15)**

*From death to life because of hearing God's word (John 5:24)*

24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.

*From death to life because of God's love and grace (Eph 2:4-5)*

4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.

*From death to life because of loving one another (1 John 2:9-11)*

9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.

*From death to life because of belief in Jesus (John 3:36)*

36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

*From death to life because of being rescued by Jesus (Col 1:12-14)*

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

### **Confident in Sacrificial Love (1 John 3:16-18)**

16 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.

17 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?

18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

### **Sacrificial love that uses Jesus example of laying down His life (16)**

*Example of how to love enough to give life (John 15:12-14)*

12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command.

*Example of risking life for others (Rom 16:3-4)*

3 Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. 4 They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

*Example of willing to die for God's work (Phil 2:28-30)*

29 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

*Example of walking as Jesus did and love being complete in Him (1 John 2:5-6)*

5 But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: 6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

*Example of being willing to deny self and lose life (Mark 8:34-35)*

34 Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

*Example of willing to die for those who are not righteous (Rom 5:7-8)*

7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

### **Sacrificial love that helps those in need (17)**

*Helping those in need by being kind to the poor (Prov 19:17)*

17 He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done.

*Helping those in need by sharing resources (Isa 58:6-7)*

6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

*Helping those in need by supplying their needs out of our abundance (2 Cor 8:14-15)*

14 At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, 15 as it is written: "He who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little."

*Helping those in need by generously sharing (1 Tim 6:18)*

18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

*Helping those in need by not forgetting to do good and sharing (Heb 13:16)*

16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

*Helping those in need by supporting the helpless (James 1:27)*

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

### **Sacrificial love that is accompanied by action (18)**

*Love accompanied by action through responding to daily opportunities (Matt 25:41-43)*

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'

*Love accompanied by action through providing physical needs versus just wishing them well (James 2:14-17)*

15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. 16 If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? 17 In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

*Love accompanied by action through putting God's word into practice (Luke 6:47-49)*

47 I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. 48 He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. 49 But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

*Love accompanied by action through not just being hearing of the word, but doers (Ezek 33:30-32)*

31 My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. 32 Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.

*Love accompanied by action through being obedient (Matt 21:28-31)*

28 "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 29 "I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. 30 "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. 31 "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered.

### **Confident in Sincere Love (1 John 3:19-24)**

19 And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.  
20 For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.  
21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.  
22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.  
23 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.

### **Sincere love that results in confidence toward God (19-21)**

*Confidence toward God because God will be the judge (1 Cor 4:4-5)*

4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

*Confidence toward God because of having Jesus as our High Priest (Heb 4:15-16)*

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. 16 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.

*Confidence toward God because of being cleansed by God (Heb 10:22)*

22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

*Confidence toward God by continuously being in Jesus (1 John 2:28)*

28 And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

*Confidence toward God because believing in the Name of Jesus (1 John 5:13-15)*

13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us — whatever we ask — we know that we have what we asked of him.

## **Sincere love that is in obedience to God's commandments (22-23)**

*Obedience to God's commandments by remaining in Jesus' love (John 15:10)*

10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

*Obedience to God's commandments by loving Jesus (John 14:15)*

15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

*Obedience to God's commandments to obtain loving communion with God (John 14:23-24)*

23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

*Obedience to God's commandments by offering ourselves as God's slave (Rom 6:16)*

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

*Obedience to God's commandments to show love for God (1 John 5:3)*

3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,

*Obedience to God's commandments by walking in obedient love (2 John 6)*

6 And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

## **Conclusion and Other Thoughts**

### ***Commentary Thoughts from Thomas Constable***

#### **Verse 11**

The message that John and his faithful followers had heard from the beginning was Jesus' command to His disciples to love one another as He had loved them (John 13:34-35; John 15:12).

"When differences arise within a community, hard feelings can be the result." [Note: Yarbrough, p197.]

#### **Verse 12**

Cain's murder of Abel evidenced control by Satan rather than by God. Cain was jealous because of Abeles greater righteousness, and this motivated him to kill his brother ( Genesis 4:3-8; cf. John 8:40; John 8:42; John 8:44). Often our pride tempts us to dislike those who are more righteous than we are because they make us feel guilty by comparison. This is the only Old Testament reference in John's epistles and the only proper name, except for names of God, in 1John. Love and hatred are typical forms of righteousness and sin respectively. [Note: Dodd, p82.]

Saying that Cain was unsaved and so an unsaved person must be in view here will not work. The Bible does not say that Cain was unsaved. Furthermore, Christians have committed murder, as Cain did. Peter warned his readers, "Let none of you suffer as a murderer ..." (1 Peter 4:15). Christians are capable of any and every type of gross sin. It should be obvious that a true believer can hate his brother Christian.

#### **Verse 13**

If we feel loving concern for one another, it should not surprise us if unrighteous people hate us for being more righteous than they are. Apparently John's first readers could not understand why the world hated them, because he wrote, "Stop marveling." Christians are to the world what Abel was to Cain, so we should not be surprised if the world hates us. Sometimes unbelievers who become angry with us, for example, are reacting more against God in us than they are reacting against us personally.

"Of central importance for victory when a Christian is subjected to the world's hatred is the recognition that hatred is the natural response of the sinful world toward righteousness." [Note: Hiebert, "An Expository . . .," 146:302.]

"The author does not say that the world always hates believers. It did not always hate Jesus. But whenever the community of faith acts so as to expose the greed, the avarice, the hatred, and the wickedness of the world, it must expect rejection; and if it should go so far as to interfere with its evil practices, as Jesus did in the temple, it may expect suffering and brutal death (cf. John 15:18-19; John 15:25; John 17:14)." [Note: Barker, p335.]

#### **Verse 14**

Love for other Christians shows the presence of new life in us and is a secondary ground for assurance (cf. 1 John 5:13). "Death" and "life" are two vastly different spheres of existence. The contrast shows the great change that has taken place in the believer's life. The one who does not love at all is the person who is abiding in death rather than in eternal life. John made the case extreme to make his point clear. His contrasts are death and life, hatred and love, darkness and light.

#### **Verse 15**

"Every one" includes Christians. Murder is the ultimate outward expression of hatred (cf. Matthew 5:21-22). The key to the statement that concludes this verse is the words "abiding in him." John evidently meant that no Christian whose eternal life (i.e. Jesus Christ; 1 John 1:2) has control of him, who is walking in fellowship with God, will commit murder. Some believers have committed murder, but they were not abiding believers when they did so (cf. John 15:4).

#### **Verse 16**

In contrast to the murderer Cain's Acts, we see love in Jesus Christ's laying down His life for us (cf. John 10:11). This is the opposite of taking another person's life, as Cain did. Jesus Christ laid down His life once, and we ought to lay down our lives repeatedly in self-sacrificing love, as the tenses of the Greek verbs suggest.

"Most people associate Christianity with the command to love, and so they think that they know all about Christianity when they have understood its teaching in terms of their own concept of love. John found it necessary to explain clearly to his readers what he meant by love ....

"Love means readiness to do anything for other people." [Note: Marshall, p192.]

If hatred of a brother Christian is the antithesis of eternal life, what does true Christian love look like? John proceeded to explain.

#### **Verse 17**

We may not have the opportunity to save a brother's life by dying in his place. Nevertheless we can and should do the next best thing, namely, sustaining his life when he has needs. When I give to a brother in need what might keep me alive, I have followed the Lord Jesus' example of self-sacrificing love.

#### **Verse 18**

The evidence of genuine love is not verbal professions but vital performances, deeds rather than words (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1; James 2:15-16).

"The major concern of this passage is to encourage obedient and active love from all those who claimed allegiance to the Johannine church." [Note: Smalley, p199.]

#### **Verse 19-20**

"By this" refers to what John said in 1 John 3:17-18. Tangible demonstrations of love for the brethren show the believer's true character, his righteousness. They should be a comfort to us when we feel guilty that we have not met many needs, a condition that prevails no matter how generous we may be. We can overcome feelings of false guilt by remembering that God knows our real motives. He does not judge on the basis of appearance, as we often judge ourselves.

"This phrase ["before Him," 1 John 3:19] could refer to standing in the presence of God on the day of judgment (1 John 4:17), an occasion which might well fill the heart of a man with foreboding. But the context here is one of prayer: dare we approach God with our requests if we feel guilty before him? On the whole, it seems more likely that this is what is in John's mind (cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:9[-10]). We then have a smooth transition to 1 John 3:21. [Note: Marshall, p199.]

The practice of such self-sacrificing love for the brethren can give us boldness in God's presence now as we pray and in the future when we stand before Him at His judgment seat.

### **Verse 21-22**

True love for the brethren demonstrated in deeds of self-sacrifice enables the believer to face Jesus Christ unashamedly whenever He may appear (cf. 1 John 2:28). John stressed the importance of a clear conscience again (cf. 1 John 1:7; 1 John 2:2; Hebrews 9:9; Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 10:2; Hebrews 10:22; 1 Timothy 1:19). Shamelessness can give us appropriate boldness to approach God's throne of grace in prayer even now (cf. John 8:28-29). We will receive our requests if such is the will of God. John did not state this condition here, but he mentioned it later (1 John 5:14-15).

"There is nothing mechanical or magical about prayer. For it to be effective, the will of the intercessor needs to be in line with the will of God; and such a conformity of wills is brought about only as the believer lives in Christ." [Note: Smalley, p205.]

"Obedience is the first condition for answered prayer, when that prayer is offered by a child of God. The second, related condition is willing service: the determination to "do" always (*poioumen*, present) what pleases God." [Note: Ibid, p206.]

### **Verse 23**

Jesus taught the apostles to trust in Him and to love each other. This is the distillation of His teaching. Specifically He taught them to trust in the efficacy of His name when they prayed to His Father (John 14:12-15; John 16:24). This is an added ground for confidence in prayer.

"There are frequent points of contact between this Epistle and the words of Jesus in John 13-17." [Note: Robertson, 6:228.]

Believing in this verse probably refers to believing for eternal salvation rather than to believing after we are Christians. The tense of the Greek verb (aorist) points to this as does the object of belief, namely, "the name of His Son Jesus Christ."

"To believe in the name of Jesus Christ is to accept Jesus Christ for what He really is." [Note: Barclay, p104.]

"The Christian who hates his brother acts utterly out of touch with God, exemplifies the murderous spirit of Cain, and is "abiding" in the sphere of death ( 1 John 3:10-15). By contrast, the loving Christian takes Christ's own self-sacrificing love as the model by which he himself should love in actual deeds and in accord with the truth ( 1 John 3:16-18). If he does Song of Solomon, he can quiet a guilt-ridden heart, achieve a superb confidence before God in prayer, and expect answers to his prayers precisely because he is pleasing God (1 John 3:19-23)." [Note: Hodges, *The Epistles . . .*, p169.]

### **Verse 24**

Another *inclusio* helps us identify the theme of this section: God abiding in believers (1 John 3:24; 1 John 4:16). God abiding in us, as well as we abiding in Him, is essential to our having boldness as we anticipate the judgment seat of Christ (1 John 2:28; 1 John 4:17-18). Having boldness as we anticipate the judgment seat of Christ is the subject of the body of this epistle (1 John 2:28 to 1 John 4:19).

Obedience results in mutual abiding, God in man and man in God. God "abides" in every obedient believer, but He indwells every believer (cf. John 15:4-5; John 15:7; Romans 8:9). The evidence that God "abides" in us is the manifestation of His Spirit in and through us. This is the first explicit reference to the Holy Spirit in 1 John.

"Thus, the sentence is a definition of abiding. To abide is to keep his commandments." [Note: Ryrrie, "The First . . .," p1474.]

*(Adapted from URL: <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/dcc/1-john-3.html>)*

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary***

A few years ago, my wife had knee-replacement surgery. I chose not to witness the procedure. When she came back to her room, I could see incisions and stitches, but I could not see an artificial appliance made of metal and plastic under her skin. A small, paranoid part of me wondered briefly if it was all fake. Maybe the surgeon and hospital conspired to make a few cuts to give the appearance of surgery, charged thousands of dollars, and left her old, worn-out knee intact. It takes time to recover from this operation. At first, the pain of healing outweighed the previous pain of a crippled knee. Gradually, though, her knee got better. Now, after complete recovery, she has much better mobility and much less pain than before. Even though I did not see it placed there and cannot see it now, I know there is a new knee in my wife's right leg. I witness the evidence every day. John asks if we love God. He insists we cannot make a credible claim to loving God if we hate other people. Furthermore, we cannot claim to love other people without evidence. Does the love of God in our hearts result in acts of kindness toward others? Cain's heart of hate and anger resulted in murder, a heinous but accurate reflection of his inner thoughts. Jesus Christ's heart of love resulted in the willing sacrifice of his life as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29), the same world that John warns will hate Jesus' followers (1 John 3:13). The paradox is profound, but the evidence is there with Jesus. While we were his enemies, he died for us (Romans 5:8-10). What does the evidence of our lives reveal about the secrets of our hearts?

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary***

Love Not Hate - In his letter to believers, the apostle John repeated Jesus' command to love each other (1 John 3:11). It is easy to find things to criticize about another person and end up despising that person. However, the biblical command is to love in the same way God loves—giving grace and overlooking faults and weaknesses. Jesus wants His followers to depend on Him to remove these kinds of negative attitudes and replace them with love. John used Cain as an example of a hateful person. He was jealous and despised his brother, Abel (Gen. 4:6-7). This seething attitude eventually led him to murder Abel (vs. 8; Heb. 11:4; 1 John 3:12). This should never occur among believers. Jesus made this clear in His Sermon on the Mount: a physical murder does not have to take place. If you hate in your heart, cutting off a relationship, wishing the person was dead or disregarding them—that is like killing the person (Matt. 5:21-22). God's children should grow, develop, and increasingly look and love like Him.

Biblical Love - So, what does true biblical love look like? The highest form of love is from God. He willingly extends a grace-filled love, given to everyone, even when He knows it will not be received. Jesus exemplified this kind of love when He laid down His life for the entire world.

Practical Love - How do we love today? John said, do not only talk about God's love, but let people see it in action. If a brother or sister is in need, the Christian ought to be the one to come to the rescue. If you turn your back on someone in need, how can you say, "I love God, and I love people as He does"? Once a person believes in Jesus and is filled with His love, compassion for others comes next. The Holy Spirit seals the relationship, reassuring the person of their close relationship with Christ.