

1 John
Loving One Another (Part 2)
1 John 2:9-11
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Well, I encourage you to turn with me to 1 John. For those of you who are our guests, we study verse by verse through the books of the Bible, and you catch us studying the book of 1 John. Now, I want to begin by just mentioning the game of football, I know that's on a lot of people's minds and hearts these days. I don't enjoy many sports. Well, at least I don't watch them regularly. I enjoy most of them, but I truly love football. I grew up playing high school football and have always been a fan of college and professional football.

This past weekend, last weekend, my family and I were watching the NFL wild card games; maybe some of you saw them. And during a couple of those games, fights broke out between players. Now I probably shouldn't tell you this, but that's actually my wife's, Sheila's, favorite part. Even if she's not sitting there watching, I have strict instructions to call her, pause and call her, and rewind so that she can watch the fights.

But during one especially heated exchange, the camera zoomed in to show the offending players. You know, there were two players really going at each other. Of course, all the rest of their teammates were around, but there were two huge men desperately trying to injure one another. It's kind of hard through all that, you know, helmet and pads and all of that. But they were trying their best. And as I watched that, I thought it was ironic that as they zoomed in and these two men were killing each other, or trying to, on the back of one player's helmet were the words "Stop Hate," and on the back of the other player's helmet was the words, "Be Love." So, "Stop Hate" and "Be Love" we're trying to kill each other right there in the middle of the football field.

Now as I saw that, in addition to the obvious irony, I was struck by the fact that as human beings made in the image of God, we all understand, or at least most people on this planet understand, that hate is bad, and that love is a worthy goal. Sadly, however, because of our fallenness, we tend to redefine love in a way that makes it doable for us, or we determine to love

those people ‘out there,’ you know, some oppressed group, that’s really popular. I love that group or I love the people that follow me on social media. It’s easy to say we love people that we neither live with nor have day to day interactions with.

But real love is rare, even by the world’s definition, and it’s totally extinct by God’s definition. In this first letter that John writes, John the Apostle uses the standard of true biblical love for fellow Christians as a test of the reality of our faith. Let’s read it together, 1 John 2, we find ourselves in verse 7; the section begins in verse 7, runs all the way down through verse 17. But we’re looking right now at verses 7 through 11. Let me read it for us. John writes. This is the Word, the inspired inerrant Word of God. He writes:

Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

Those verses are in the middle of that larger section that I just described, and the point of the entire section is this, you can know, personally, that you have eternal life, that you are a true Christian if you have a new love, a new love for God and a new love for His people.

This paragraph presents two truths about love. First of all, in verses 7 and 8, and we’ve already studied this together, “The Divine Priority of Love.” He says love is an old commandment because it reflects God’s eternal character, and because it’s commanded at the very beginning of the Old Testament, it’s an old commandment. But it’s also a new commandment reaffirmed by Christ and, of course, illustrated in the life of Christ in HD; it is the priority. Love is the biblical priority. Why? Because, if you love God and love people, you keep the entire Law of God. So, it’s always been and still is the divine priority.

Now, beginning in verse 9 and running down through verse 17, we're looking at "The Believers Commitment to Love." Because it's a divine priority, those of us who have been born again, who have been changed by the Spirit of God, now have this new commitment to love. All true believers have this commitment to love, a new love for God's people and a new love for God.

Now, we're considering the first of those in verses 9 through 11, and that is that "A True Christian Has a New Love for God's People," a new love for God's people. Last time, we looked at verse 9, and I put it in this form, a false Christian, that's somebody who says, "Yes, I'm a Christian," but isn't really a Christian by God's definition. "A False Christian Does Not Truly Love God's People."

Look at verse 9, "The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now." The one who is regularly claiming that he knows Jesus, that he's in Christ, that he belongs to Christ, and yet, at the same time, is consistently hating, and we looked at that, remember, it's not just active malice, it's the failure to love. So, if someone claims to be a Christian and is consistently failing to love his brother, he is in the darkness "until now." He's an unbeliever; he's not truly a Christian.

Now last time, I showed you from Titus 3, and Romans 3; that because of human depravity, apart from God's grace, every person on this planet fails to truly love. That's you, that's me, that's every person. But in the interest of being clear, I just want to give you a little caveat to that so that I don't misrepresent the truth, or you don't misunderstand me.

Let me say this, "The reality of human depravity and man's failure to truly love is not a denial of the residual image of God in man." Man is made in God's image and at the fall, that image was horribly marred, but it wasn't destroyed, it wasn't obliterated. And so, there are things we see coming out of even unbelievers that reflect something of that image. And therefore, because of that residual image of God, I am not denying that unbelievers sometimes do altruistic things, clearly, they do. A wonderful example are those men and women who rushed into the twin towers on 9/11 to save others without concern for themselves. That's a reflection, in the end, of the image of God.

Also, what I'm teaching you about depravity is not a denial that there are different degrees at which people manifest that depravity. So please don't misconstrue my comments to mean that you and I should always be cynical of every interaction we have with unbelievers. That's not honest and it's not loving "love believes the best." And so, we shouldn't be cynical, nor should we proudly think ourselves better than them because we're now different. But we should not be naive or unbiblical in our view of man. The vast majority of biblical texts emphasize that every single person, apart from God's grace, if they've not experienced the grace of God, they are enslaved to self-centered depravity. And without grace, not one of us would ever manifest true biblical love. As genuine Christians, we have received God's grace in Christ in salvation, and we continue to receive that grace, as John says in his Gospel, "grace upon grace," daily. That's the reason we now love. It's not because we're special people; it's because we serve a special God who, in His grace, has changed us and given us a heart of love. But back to verse 9, you can know that you've never experienced God's grace and that you're a false Christian if you don't love God's people.

Now today, we come to verse 10, where John explains that "A True Christian Genuinely Loves God's People," a true Christian genuinely loves God's people.

Let's begin by considering "The Nature of This Love" that we have for others. Verse 10, "The one who loves his brother," literally, the Greek text says, "the one loving his brother." John, as he has done before in this letter, intentionally uses the present tense. "He is the one loving" to show that this love is not occasional, but it is the true Christian's constant, continual pattern.

And that makes sense, right?

I mean after all, as we've seen back in John 13, in the Upper Room Discourse, our Lord said this in John 13:34.

A new commandment I give you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.

So, Jesus commanded that we love one another. And He said that will be the mark, and by the way, it was in the early church, this true love for other Christians was an identifying mark, that the world saw. Perhaps you've heard the quote by the early church father, Tertullian, who lived at the end of the second century and the beginning of the third century, and he wrote this:

It is our care (meaning Christians) it is our care for the helpless, our practice of loving-kindness that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. Look, they say, how they love one another. Look how they are prepared to die for one another.

So true Christians love other Christians.

But that provokes a really important question and that is, “What exactly is biblical love?”

There's a whole lot of fuzzy thinking in our world about the nature of love and even among the church. What is biblical love? Well, if you look at verse 10, the Greek word that's used for love there is *'agapao.'* That's the verb form of the noun you probably recognize, *'agape,' 'agapao;'* it's the love that is *'agape.'* It's often used, this verb, is often used of love that's not merely emotional. Instead, it's used of a kind of love that is an intelligent, purposeful decision of the will, to seek the greatest good of another regardless of the cost to yourself. In fact, love, and this is so important to understand, as one author put it, “It's not a warm feeling,” love is not a warm feeling. This is how a lot of people think about love. They have this warm feeling toward others in sort of a general way, that's not biblical love.

Now, when you look at this word, 'love' here, *'agape,'* let me warn you of making too big a difference between the Greek words *'agape'* and *'phileo.'* If you've been in the church, the Christian church any time at all, maybe you've heard a lot made of those two words. But understand this, *'agape'* is not solely used of holy love in the Bible. In fact, look down at verse 15. It says, “Don't love the world,” don't *'agapao'* the world. Don't use *'agape'* love toward the world. So, it's not just holy love. By the way, this same word is also used in Luke 11:43, of the Pharisees loving the chief seats in the synagogues. Because Greek has several words for love, unlike English, the New Testament authors, including John, use *'agape'* and *'phileo'* at times with slightly different nuances, that's true. But normally, they're used as synonyms, so be careful, don't make too much because of the nature of those words.

Think about our English word 'love.' Its context and the object of the love that determines its meaning. As I've mentioned to you before, we use the same English word to say I love football and I love God. But context tells us those are two different kinds of love. And so that's the same thing in Greek with this biblical word for love. It's the context, it's the object of the love that tells you the kind of love described. So, what we need to do, when we look at verse 10 and it says, "The true Christian loves other believers," is don't just look at the word '*agapao*' or '*agape*.' We can do that in part, but the question is, what kind of love for others identifies a genuine Christian?

Well, the good news is, in this very letter, John defines and describes the kind of love that true believers have for one another, and he does so very clearly. And I want to take just a few minutes to walk you through that because if we're supposed to love, we better know what it is. It's not a warm feeling. It's not something generic or general.

So, here's the nature of the love a true believer has. Biblical love, the true believer's love is, first of all, the love of God, it is the love of God. In other words, it's not normal, humanly-defined love. The love we're supposed to have is of the same nature as the attribute of God-love. Look at chapter 4; 1 John 4, verse 8, "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love." The point is, the love that we express and manifest is of the same kind, the same nature as the love that God Himself is and demonstrates. It's the same nature as the attribute of God.

Secondly, it is the same nature as God's love that motivated Him to send His Son. Look at chapter 4, verses 9 and 10.

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son (His one-of-a-kind Son) into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us (And watch this, His love motivated us. To send) and sent His Son to be the propitiation (the satisfaction of God's just wrath, against) for our sins."

So, the love that you and I are to have for other believers, it's of the same nature as the love that motivated God to send Christ.

And it is of the same nature as Christ's love that motivated Him to die in our place. Look at chapter 3, verse 16, "We know love by this, that He (Christ) laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." He says, "Look, we understand the kind of love I'm talking about," John says, "because we saw it in the love that Christ demonstrated when he laid down His life for us." So, understand, then that the love that true believers have for other believers is, in fact, the love of God. You say, "Well, how in the world do we human beings come to reflect and manifest the love of God?"

That brings me to the second identifying point or mark of the nature of the love we're to show. Not only is it the love of God, but secondly, "Biblical Love is Solely a Work of the Spirit." We come to manifest this attribute of God Himself, not in the same degree, obviously, but love of the same kind, because of the work of the Spirit. It is a reflection of, our love is a reflection of and a response to God's own love. Look at chapter 4, verse 7, "Beloved, let us love one another, (Where does that love come from?) for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." So, it's because of the new birth; it's because of what the Spirit does in us that we are now able to manifest this love.

Look down in verse 16, "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. (We came to know it in the gospel, we have believed the love that God has for us.) God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." And then verse 19, "We love, because He first loved us." So, how do we come to manifest the very love of God Himself? It's because we've been born again; it's because we've been born of the Spirit. He's given us life; and in giving us life, He has implanted, this within us, a knowledge of God's love, and we reflect and respond to that love by loving God and loving others.

It's solely a work of the Spirit also because it is produced in the believer by the Holy Spirit. In this new birth that is described in verse 7, "... (having been) born of God," where does that come from? Well, it comes from the work of the Spirit, look down in verse 13, "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit." It's the Spirit that does this; the Spirit accomplishes the new birth we're told. And the Spirit helps us

understand the love of God, respond to that love, and it's the Spirit who produces love in our hearts. Galatians 5:22, "...the fruit of the Spirit (That is the fruit the Spirit produces when He's in our lives.) is (What's number one?) love." If you have the Spirit, the Spirit will produce love in your heart. It's going to happen, not perfect love, not unbroken selfishness, but love, genuine love. Now, this love then, because it's solely a work of the Spirit, is only possible for those who also love God; it comes together. Look at chapter 4, verse 20:

If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

Do you see, love for God and love for others is inseparably interconnected?

The kind of love we're talking about is not normal, human love that can be manifest without the Spirit, without the work of God. I'm not saying, again, there can't be some residual reflection of the image of God, but by in large, true biblical love only exists in the heart of a person that has the Spirit because it's the Spirit that produces this in the heart of believer.

Now, there's a third point we need to understand about the nature of this love that we have. Not only is it the love of God, not only is it solely a work of the Spirit, but thirdly, "Biblical Love is the Love of Action," it's the love of action. Biblical love is not a warm feeling for a group of people, that's not biblical love. Biblical love is the love of action; it's a decision of the will to act.

And how does it act? Well, let me give you the ways it acts. First of all, biblical love acts in expressing itself sacrificially, it's expressed sacrificially. Look at chapter 3 again, verse 16, I read it a moment ago, "We know love by this, that (Christ) laid down His life for us; (He sacrificed Himself to the fullest extent possible; He died for us, He sacrificed Himself. Now notice the rest of the verse.) and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." If necessary, we must be willing to sacrifice our own lives for each other.

That happened in the early church, and if the Lord ever allows severe persecution in our country, He will give us as Christians the grace to do this because it's never the person. Don't look back on those martyrs and think, "Oh, there's this wonderfully strong person that, you know, he did all that on his own." No, he was enabled to do that by the grace of the Spirit and the grace of Christ, and the Lord would give us that ability as well. But it's sacrificial. Biblical love is when you put yourself out for others, when you intentionally put the needs and interests of others before your own. And obviously the ultimate expression of that is giving your life. However, true love is also expressed and more often expressed in much smaller sacrifices.

And this brings me to the second way this is a love of action. Not only is it expressed sacrificially, but it's expressed practically, it's expressed practically. Look at verses 17 and 18 of chapter 3. He's just said we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren; we ought to sacrifice ourselves even to the point of death. But then, he doesn't let us off the hook; he doesn't say, "Oh, and if you don't have to lay down your life for your brother, then live it selfishly as you want." No, he says, "...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?" How does a love for God abide in the heart of a person like that; who has a way to meet the needs of his brother and refuses to do so? Verse 18, "Little children, let us not love with word, (That's a lot of our world right now; "Oh, I love, I love all those people out there." And then they're miserable for the people in their house.) let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth." Biblical love for others is measured in how we treat them in very practical ways.

You know, it's interesting in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 25, the Judgment of Nations as it's called, that takes place at the end of the Tribulation, where Jesus will judge those who survive the Tribulation Period and there are sheep and goats, there are true believers and those who are not believers. And it's interesting, clearly in that passage, a person is saved on the basis of grace because he talks about, "it's been granted, enter the kingdom which has been prepared for you, which is being granted to you." It's grace, they don't earn, nobody earns their way into heaven. But the way Jesus evaluates at that judgment, the reality of their faith is He looks at their small acts of love shown to fellow believers. You remember this? He says, "I was hungry, and (What?) you fed me...I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink...I was without a place

to stay, and you gave me a place to stay...I was naked, and you gave me clothes; I was sick, and you cared for me...I was imprisoned, and you visited me.” (Paraphrase).

In other words, true love for Christ is shown by true love for other believers, and true love for other believers is shown by giving them such practical things as food, drink, housing, clothes, caring for the sick, visiting those who are in prison for their faith. So Biblical love isn't posting about how much you love people on Facebook or Instagram; it's deciding to do something for another person in spite of what it costs you. It means you make the phone call, it means you prepare a meal, it means you have the discussion that needs to be had, it means you meet a financial need, it means you keep their kids because they need to do something important, go to a doctor's appointment or care for someone else. It means they're sick and you visit them in the hospital, it means you take them a meal, it means you attend the funeral of their loved one, it means you make those sacrifices to practically love your brothers and sisters in Christ. Biblical love is a love of action; it's expressed practically.

Thirdly, it's also expressed relationally, relationally, and we're going to go out of John for this one. Go back to 1 Corinthians, chapter 13. You know, there are a lot of people who say, “Yeah, you know, I do those things for other people.” but if you look at their relationships with the people in their lives, they're in shambles. No, true love expresses itself in your relationships. If you're married, think your spouse, think your family. If you're not, think your roommate, your coworkers. Here's true love.

Now, you remember the context here. They were fighting for the best gifts, the miraculous gifts in Corinth, and Paul is going to teach them the importance of love, and he begins in chapter 13, verse 1 by saying, “If you had the miraculous gifts but lacked love, you'd be worthless. If you really had miraculous, spiritual gifts like in the first century, and you didn't have love to go along with them, it'd be absolutely worthless!” Oh, and by the way, verse 2, if you had extensive biblical and theological knowledge, even to the miraculous gifts level, and you didn't have love, it's worthless. Verse 3, you can even sacrifice yourself, think about this, you can sacrifice yourself, and it not be motivated by true love for the other person, but by what you get out of it, that's worthless too. (Paraphrase.)

So, then he talks about love. So, here's the barometer of love in your life and my life relationally. Love, if you truly love others, "You are patient with them." If you don't love them, you are habitually impatient. There's the test, do you love them? Do you have love? Well, if you're habitually patient with them, you love. If you're habitually impatient, you don't.

"Love is kind;" if you love them, you are kind toward them. If you don't really love them, then you tend to be harsh in your words and manner.

"Love is not jealous." In other words, true love is happy for other people to have things you don't have and successes you don't have. On the other hand, selfishness wants it for me, and I can't really rejoice in what you have.

"Love does not brag and is not arrogant." You know what that's saying? That's saying true love isn't always seeing yourself above others; if you see yourself as smarter and as better and as superior to all the people in your relationships, you don't love them, you love yourself. True love is about them, not you.

Verse 5, "True Love does not act unbecomingly." It behaves itself. It does not seek its own! True love isn't about what I get out of the relationship; true love is about what I can give to you because I love you. On the other hand, the lack of love is all about me, what does this have to deliver to me, what do I get out of this?

"Is not provoked." That's a good translation, but it can make us feel a little smug like, "Well I'm not provoked." What does that mean? It's touchy. True love isn't touchy, isn't quick to see an offense in everything that's said and everything that's done. On the other hand, a lack of love is quick to see in every word, in every gesture, in every facial expression, something intended to hurt me.

“Does not take into account a wrong suffered.” In other words, true love is quick to forgive. On the other hand, if you don't love the people in your life, you hold grudges, and you just never let it go, you don't love them.

Verse 6, “does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth.” True love is all about good and not evil. Verse 7, “It bears all things, believes all things.” By the way, “believes all things” means you believe the best about that person you love until there is incontrovertible evidence to the contrary. In other words, love isn't naïve, isn't stupid, but love is quick to believe the very best until there's evidence to the contrary.

“Hopes, all things,” hopes for the best for that person and for the relationship. “Endures, all things.” Listen, love is a bulldog, it never lets go! On the other hand, selfishness is quick to let go because it's not delivering what I want. So, there you go. So, ask yourself, as I have to ask myself, when you look at your relationships, “Does the way you treat the people in your life, is it love by that standard? Or is it not love?” True biblical love is a love of action, it's expressed relationally. You see, true Christians love God's people, not with normal human love, but with a divine love implanted in us by the Holy Spirit, and it's expressed sacrificially, practically, and relationally; that's the nature of our love.

Now, Verse 10 goes on to describe the results of our love. When we demonstrate true biblical love for others, it produces two spiritual results in us. First of all, it results in biblical assurance. Verse 10 says, “The one who loves his brother abides in the Light.” Light is again describing Jesus Christ. Abides means ‘to remain or continue.’ In other words, our love for others proves that we are inseparably united to the Light, to Jesus Christ. We live in and are permanent residents of His Light. We are part of the brotherhood that has been transferred, Colossians 1:13, “(out of) the domain of darkness, ...(into) the kingdom of His beloved Son,” the Kingdom of Light. John couldn't be clearer, and I love this, the one who genuinely loves his Christian brothers and sisters is and can have confidence that he is a genuine follower of Jesus Christ.

Now, folks, this isn't some kind of pretend assurance that many in our world are taught to have, you know, it's not about the date you wrote in front of the front of your Bible, it's not about

some experience you had. This is genuine biblical assurance; this is God's own assurance. When you truly love like we just looked at, not perfectly, but it's the expression of your life, then you can be sure that you're a Christian because human beings can't muster that up. That has to be a work of the Spirit.

There's a second result when we love our Christian brothers and sisters, it's spiritual stability. Verse 10 goes on to say, "...and there is no cause for stumbling in him." Now, this Greek word is *'skandalon,'* and originally was used of the trigger stick in an animal trap, and then of the trap itself, and so some kind of go that direction. But this word is used most often in the Septuagint, the Bible of the first century, as a stumbling block or an act of stumbling, and that's its primary use in the New Testament as well.

Now look at the end of verse 10, because the grammar is a bit ambiguous. The question is, "Who stumbles?" Well, there are two primary options. John may mean that the true believer won't cause others to stumble, and a lot of commentators go that direction because the word stumbling block is used that way most often in the New Testament. Now, if that's what John meant, this is what he's saying. The fact that the true believer loves others will keep him from being the source of sin for others. He's going to go out of his way not to be a stumbling block that will cause others to sin. Now, that's possible, and certainly that's true, and it's possible that's what's being said here.

But I personally prefer the second option, and it's this, the end of verse 10 is saying that the true believer won't stumble himself, and I say it's that because in context, it's the most likely option. Verse 11 describes what's true about the person, not the effect he has on others, and I think that's likely the intention in verse 10. So, if that's what John means and I think it is, then he's saying this, "The believer who is shown to be genuine by his love for other Christians will never stumble and fall to his own destruction." It's not talking about sinning; we all do that; he's already talked about that. He's talking about ultimate falling, stumbling to our destruction spiritually. It's like Psalm 119:165, "Those who love Your law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble." Literally, the Hebrew text says, "they have no stumbling block." 2 Peter 1:10, "...brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing

you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble.” He doesn't mean never sin; he means you're never going to stumble in the ultimate final, destructive sense and in a way that your faith is going to be devastated. So, the results of the true believer's love for others are number one, biblical assurance of salvation for himself, and the promise of spiritual stability, or we could say, spiritual survival; he's never going to fatally stumble to his destruction.

So far, then in verse 9, we've learned that “A False Christian Does Not Truly Love God's People.” In verse 10, we've seen that “A True Christian Genuinely Loves God's People.” Thirdly, in verse 11, we see that “A Professing Christian Without Love Deceives His Own Heart,” a professing Christian without love deceives his own heart. Look at verse 11, “But the one who hates his brother,” John, now returns to that person back up in verse 9, the person who claims to be a Christian, but habitually fails to love his fellow Christians. And again, he uses the present tense in Greek, implying that this hating or this failing to love biblically is characteristic; it's not something that just happens occasionally, that's true for all of us. Instead, for this person, it's characteristic.

And then he gives three descriptions of this professing Christian. First of all, he describes his spiritual state. Verse 11 says, “...he is (in the) darkness.” He lives in the darkness, in his own sinful behavior, but also, as Colossians 1:13 says, he still lives in the domain of darkness. He's still in the kingdom of Satan. In other words, he's never been regenerated; he has no real fellowship with God because he's in the darkness and God is Light. This person's separation from God is, as one author put it, “The one unaltered and controlling reality of his life.” Laise writes this, “Whatever he does or wherever he goes or whatever changes may take place in him in other respects, he is in the darkness still.” In other words, this person is not a Christian.

But look at his continual practice. Verse 11 says. “...and (he) walks in the darkness.” Now, I think John is clearly referring back to something he wrote in his gospel, John 8:12.

“...Jesus...spoke to them, saying (this), ‘I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me (The one who is my disciple, listen to this.) will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.’” The professing Christian without love lives in a constant pattern of sin, listen carefully, the professing Christian without love lives in a constant pattern of sin, regardless of how moral

he looks. Why is that? Because love, biblical love is the fulfillment of the Law. His failure to love God, his failure to love others, means his entire life is a moral lie; he is in constant disobedience to God because he doesn't love. Jackman writes this, listen carefully.

The absence of positive active love for others can be a sure and indication of walking in the darkness as the more outward forms of hatred and violence because the greatest enemy of real love is self-love. That is the root of hatred.

So, this professing Christian, his state is in the darkness, his continual practice is he walks in the darkness, this is how he lives.

Thirdly, John describes his eternal destination. Notice the end of verse 11, "...and (he) does not know where he is going." Now, in English, that sounds like, 'Well, maybe this guy just wanders around aimlessly, you know, he's lost,' in the sense of he doesn't know which direction to go. That's not the Greek word that's used here; the Greek word means 'to lead or to point toward a direction.' The idea here is that this person fails to grasp the nature of the road he has chosen and its final destination. This person is tragically deceived regarding his destiny. He claims and thinks he's a Christian, but he's actually headed to hell, and he doesn't know it. John 12:35, "...Jesus said...'For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes,'" doesn't know where he's headed.

Why is this professing Christian deceived? Notice verse 11 Again, "...because (Here's why he's deceived, because) the darkness has blinded his eyes." Notice he's blind; he's blind to his real condition. He's actually unsaved even though he claims to be saved, and he's blind to his eternal destination, hell, because sin has blinded him. Proverbs 4:19, "The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know over what they stumble." Titus 3:3, all unbelievers, we before Christ were "deceived."

Now, notice the wording here in verse 11, it says, "...the darkness has blinded" him, the darkness has blinded him. That's an interesting expression. You see, when you choose the darkness, eventually your capacity to see spiritual realities is gradually, sometimes almost imperceptibly, but tragically and ultimately finally diminished and even extinguished. D.

Edmund Hebert writes, “Persistence and hatred and sin inevitably lead to moral and spiritual blindness.” David Smith puts it this way, “The penalty of living in the darkness is not merely that one does not see, but that one goes blind. The neglected faculty is atrophy.”

You see, when we don't use the spiritual vision we have, when we walk in the darkness and choose the darkness, whatever apprehension of spiritual realities we have, it grows gradually darker and darker and darker until we don't see at all. And we're blind to our condition and we're blind to our destiny. Jackman writes:

Lack of love distorts our perspective and blinds our vision. We begin to feel at home in the darkness. Animals which are kept underground eventually lose their sight. The light that is ignored soon ceases to strike us. Folks, here's a great test.

Lloyd-Jones puts it this way:

This is a terrible test (meaning an awful test, a hard test). Orthodoxy is essential, but it is not enough. If you are not loving your brother, says John, in effect, you are in darkness and you have not the love of Christ. To love your brother is much more important than orthodoxy. Yes, it is more important than mere mechanical correctness in your conduct and behavior in an ethical sense. (He goes on to say.) There are people who, like the rich young ruler, can say, “All these things I've kept from my youth up.” They are not guilty of the gross sins which they've seen in others. And yet their spirit, as they criticize, is a portrayal that they do not love their brother. Harshness, the criticizing spirit, all that is a negation of the Spirit of love. It is something that rises up in my heart and nature, and it is therefore the proof positive of whether I belong to Him or not.

So, let me ask you to do what I've had to do. Here's a test. Do you truly, biblically love your Christian brothers and sisters? Do you love the people in your house? If you're married, start there. If not, think of the other people in your life. Do you love them? Not by your standards, but by God standards, by what we've seen this morning. It's a test. If you fail the test of love for other Christians, then let me tell you on the authority of God's Word, on the authority of the Apostle John, more importantly, on the authority of Christ who gave John this book, you are not a Christian.

And so, my plea to you this morning is stop the pretense, stop claiming that you're a Christian. You see, these tests we're looking at, there are three of them; we've already looked at one, this is the second test of love. These are like three legs of a stool. If one of them isn't there, your entire claim to be a Christian collapses in shambles. And so, stop pretending that you're a Christian, I don't care how long you've pretended it, if you don't love in this biblical way, I'm not talking about perfectly, none of us do, I'm talking about, is there a predominance of true biblical love for other people in your life? If there's not, then you're not a Christian. And I beg you this morning to acknowledge that; just be honest with yourself and with God and throw yourself on your(?) His mercy, repent of your sins and believe the gospel, believe that God is love; and in His love, He sent His Son, His eternal Son, into the world, He took on full humanity, became one of us, lived among us for thirty-three years, lived a life of perfect love, love for God and love for others, and He lived that in your place if you'll believe in Him. And then He died, and He died to pay every single absence of love in your life to pay God so that God could forgive that sin in you and make you His own and you could be reconciled to Him.

And let me just tell you, because God is love, if you will repent, if you will humble yourself and you'll cry out, then God always responds to that. He never turns away a humble, contrite heart, not once. And I plead with you this morning to do so.

All true believers love, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't grow in our love. In fact, we ought to grow in our love. We, who are Christians, desire and are committed to put off the remnants of our former selves, including our selfishness, and to pursue an increasing love for our brothers and sisters. Turn to Ephesians, chapter 4; I wish I had time to go through this, I don't. Let me just call it to your attention. In Ephesians 4, verses 20 to 24, he talks about what happened in salvation and how sanctification happens. And then he gets into relationships beginning in verse 25, and he says:

Look, Christians don't lie to other Christians, and Christians deal with their anger; they don't get angry, or if they do get angry, they deal with it before the sun goes down. In other words, they don't let it build up; they they address it.

They don't steal. They work hard so they can give to others, (verse 28). (Verse 29), in their communication, they don't let rotten words come out of their mouths, but only those that edify others and give grace, because failure to do that, (verse 30), grieves the Holy Spirit.

(And look at verse 31, 32, here's the relational side of it.) Let all bitterness (You understand that.) and wrath and anger, (Wrath and anger are two words for anger; one is clamming up and the other is blowing up, pouting and outbursts.) ...So let all wrath and anger and clamor (That means yelling in your relationships.) and slander, (That's name calling. You get in the middle of an argument, and you start name-calling. You...fill in the blank.). Let all of these be put away from you along with all malice, (Malice is the desire to hurt somebody because they hurt you.). Instead, (verse 32), Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has also forgiven you. Therefore (verse 1) be imitators of God, as beloved children; (And what?) walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (Paraphrase.)

In other words, Christians love. But we need to excel still more, be pursuing putting off these things and putting on the opposite virtues so that we manifest love to those around us.

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for the directness of your Word. And, Father, thank you for this test of our love for other believers, people around us. Father, help us to take this test honestly, not using our own standard, but using yours as we've seen it this morning. And, Father, thank you that for many of us in this room, while we are not where we want to be, we can look honestly and say we see your love in us, we see a willingness to sacrifice ourselves, to meet the needs of others, to care for them. And, Lord, thank you for that. Thank you for the assurance that brings; that we can be confident that you're at work in our lives because that's not natural, that's not human for that to be the preponderance of our lives.

But, Father, for others who are here this morning who failed the test? Oh, God, give them the grace just to be honest, to be honest with Your Word, to be honest, with their own souls, to admit who they are and where they are, and to throw themselves on your mercy. And thank

you, Father, that you have never, one time, turned a humble, contrite heart away. I pray they would come to you and experience the new birth where you give them the capacity to love those around them, even today. We pray in Jesus's name, Amen.