

The Savior Sets the Standard for Love

1 John 3:16-18

February 23, 2020

Introduction: It's easy for us say to one another, I love you

It's easy to say that we love God

It's easy to say, I want to love like Jesus

But, do we really love God? And do we really want to love like Jesus

Who is this Jesus we say we want to love like?

Is it the Jesus of the Bible? The one who loved us and died for us

The Jesus who commanded us to love one another just as He loved us

If this is the Jesus we claim to want to be like and love like, then He bids us to come and die

Let's Pray

Read 1 John 3:16-18

T/S: Before we unpack this passage, I want to lay before you the context of 1 John

CONTEXT:

- Author: John the Apostle, one of the twelve, and the disciple whom Jesus loved
- A letter to the churches in Ephesus
- Written from the heart of pastor who had a loving concern for his people
- John was most likely combating the beginnings of a false teaching/gospel/heresy called Gnosticism

“False teachers were trying to pervert the fundamentals of the faith. The possibility existed that some Christians might be fooled into accepting what they were advocating. To prevent this deception from occurring, John repeatedly emphasized the basics of Christianity (obedience, love, and proper faith)”

John presents a series of doctrinal tests (**what we believe**) and moral tests (**how we behave**) throughout the letter to help determine the validity of anybody’s claim to be a Christian.

Today, we will focus on one of the foundational moral tests of genuine salvation

In particular, the peculiar qualities of love displayed by the children of God

The BIG IDEA of today's message is this:

Genuine Christians will genuinely love one another

T/S: Here is a preview of what we will look at today

PREVIEW:

- I. **God's love standard** (God's standard for love)
- II. **God's love tests** (God's test for the sincerity of love)
- III. **God's love exhorts** (God exhorts us to love one another)

T/S First, let's look at God's holy standard for love

I. LOVE'S STANDARD

Illustration: Let me show you God's love standard through a song (Play the song, "My Jesus"- 6:08)

Is that your standard for love?

If we are going to love like Him, then

we need to truly know the way He lived

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple to be like his teacher, and a servant like his master (Matthew 10:24)

We don't have license to live a sinful life

“That's how Jesus lived and loved, but I don't have to”

Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked (1 John 2:6)

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me (Luke 9:23)

As His disciples we need to know His standard for love so that we can faithfully follow in His footsteps

A. By this we know love (1 John 3:16)

- i) Christ teaches us His standard for love**
- ii) Christ's love is our measuring stick**

Christ's love is the standard (example) by which all acts of love are deemed acceptable or unacceptable in God's sight

Let's briefly look at the definition of love in order to better understand His standard for love

BIBLE PROJECT- AGAPE DEFINITION (4:48)

A. By this we know agape love

B. He laid down His life for us (1 John 3:16)

i) Christ's cross clarifies His standard for love

It is by the sin-bearing, suffering, Savior's crucifixion that we come to know God's great love

If Christ exemplified His standard for love at the cross, then what can we learn about His love by looking at the cross?

God's love is voluntary, willing to suffer, & given by free choice to bring about good for others

John 10:18 and Romans 5:8

God's love is humble and obedient

Philippians 2:6-8

God became a man (*being found in human form*)

God became a slave (*emptied himself, by taking the form of a slave*)

God died a criminal's death (*humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death*)

God was hung on a tree for us (*even death on a cross*)

*I want us to take several minutes
to thank and worship our gracious God
for His amazing love*

Play the song, "At the Cross" (4:18)

I pray you can sing that from the heart

I pray to God this understanding of Christ inflames your hearts to love Him more deeply and follow Him more faithfully

B. He layed down His life for us

C. We ought to lay down our lives for the brothers
(1 John 3:16)

i) Christ exhorts us to love one another, just as He has loved us

“If what we call love doesn’t take us beyond ourselves, it is not really love.”

Our love should be so fervent that it makes us willing to suffer even to the death for the good of the church.

“Christians ought to love one another, which implies an affection to their persons, a desire of their welfare, and a **hearty** endeavour to promote it.

This mutual affection must be fervent, which means, sincere, strong, and lasting.

Loving one another is recommended above all things”

Remember that our love is being refined day by day

Like an instrument God is tuning us to His standard for love so that the love song that our lives sing sounds more and more like Him

Application (the “so what, now what”)

If we claim to be Christians, then we must live and love one another in the same way Jesus lived and loved us.

T/S: It’s time to put our love to the test

II. Love’s Tests- Don’t skip over this part

Illustration: God’s love test is like a physical exam

As a doctor examines our physical condition, God examines our spiritual condition.

As the blood test inspects the inner body, God inspects the heart and reveals its true spiritual condition.

Its time to take inventory of your heart

A. But whoever has the world's goods and sees his brother in need (1 John 3:17)

i) Lovers of God meet the needs of lovers of God

ii) Acts 2:44-45 *And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need*

We should imitate the early church

But our greatest influence should be Christ

➤ **Our hearts evidence the love of God in us when we cheerfully and freely give to our brothers who are in need**

A. But whoever has the world's goods and sees his brother in need

B. yet closes his heart against him (1 John 3:17)

i) Love does not habitually withhold compassion

This phrase carries the idea of willfully, consciously, and habitually closing the gateway to compassion from a poor brother

God looks at the heart

1 Samuel 16:7*the LORD looks on the heart*

2 Corinthians 9:7 *Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver*

The attitude of the heart is
just as important as the act itself

B. Yet closes his heart against him,

C. How does the love of God abide in him?

(1 John 3:17)

- i) **God's love expresses itself through habitual, sacrificial giving**
- ii) **Vertical love expresses itself through horizontal love to the brothers**

➤ **It's not enough to live sacrificially and generously**

- **Our sacrifices and generosity should be righteous and motivated by love for God**

If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing (1 Corinthians 13:3)

Barnabas vs. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 4:36-5:11)

Barnabas sacrificially gave to the church with a heart that desired to **show God love by loving his poor brothers**

Ananias and Sapphira looked good on the outside because they gave to the church, but they held back some of the proceeds for themselves

Their hearts were not set on bringing God glory. Rather, they were putting on a show to make much of themselves

God's love test examines not only our hands, but our hearts

Application (the “so what, now what”)

If God's love is in you, then it will come out of you through a pattern of sacrificial and cheerfully giving to brothers in need.

T/S: At this point, God has informed us of His standard for love, inspected our love, and now He inspires us to truly love one another

III. GOD'S LOVE EXHORTS

Illustration: As a doctor exhorts his patients to eat well in order to maintain good physical health, God exhorts us to love well in order to assure ourselves of good spiritual health

A. Little children (1 John 3:18)

- i) Refers to Christ's disciples, children of God**

B. Let us not love with word or with tongue (1 John 3:18)

- i) Love is not merely words (Talk is cheap!)**
- ii) Love is not without words**

The text does not diminish the importance of loving with our words

“When the tongue and its sounds (words) are “in truth,” they become acts of love”

Examples of loving with words in truth

Prayer, Encouragement, Counsel, Preaching the word
Instructing, rebuking, correcting, training in
righteousness

Let us not love with word or with tongue,

C. But in deed and truth (1 John 3:18)

- i) Love serves
- ii) Love lives by truth (God’s word, will, and ways)

A good example of the love that God loves

VS the kind of love that God hates

John 12:3-6 “Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 **But Judas** Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, 5 “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?” 6 He **said** this, not because he cared about the poor, but

*because **he was a thief**, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.”*

- **Mary exemplifies Christlike, humble, sacrificial, affectionate, love for God**
- **Judas exemplifies one who sounds loving with his words, but his heart is selfish and greedy, and his words are false, and empty**

Application (the “so what, now what”)

- **Let us not love one another with empty, meaningless, and insincere words**
- **Let us not love one another with ulterior motives like Judas**
- **Let us love another honestly and authentically in deed and in truth. Let us champion the kind of love that includes words in truth and deeds in truth**

T/S: It is my prayer and desire that you remember these three timeless truths

REVIEW:

- 1. God’s standard for love is Christ death for us**

2. God tests our love to show us our true spiritual condition
3. God's love exhorts us **NOT** to love **with** empty, meaningless, and false words, but **rather,** to authentically love one another in truthful actions and words

T/S: As we close, I want to leave you with the giant takeaway and overall application

CLOSE:

- It is only after God gives us a love for Him that we begin to love what He loves, namely, His children
- If you are a healthy child of God, your life will display a pattern of Christ like love for the family of God. There are no ifs, ands, or buts
- If you are a child of God, then you will be willing to serve the children of God to the death

If this describes you, then rejoice in your salvation!

If it doesn't, then repent and come back to where you belong

If you are not in this place and you choose not to repent and come back, then this would be an “indicator” that you are not likely a Christian yet.

In this case, cry out to Jesus for His mercy and miraculous saving grace (Ephesians 2:8-10)

T/S: Lets go to God to thank Him for His precious Word and plead with Him to apply to us what He taught us today

Let's PRAY!

Here is the exclamation mark to 1 John 3:16-18

Play “All I have is Christ” (6:44)