

## **Lifestyle, Love, and True Salvation**

(1 John 3:4-24)

11/16/16; Wed PM Pine Grove

### **Introduction**

My dad has a horrible habit that I have caught as well though I am trying hard to stop it...

And here is the habit..

When someone talks to us, the first words out of our mouth in response is...

Huh?

I dont know if it is a function of not listening the first time or trying to stall for an answer or even an issue of hearing...

But 9 out of 10 times when you speak to my dad, the first thing he says is “huh?”

Now, the frustration for the speaker is having to repeat back what they just said...

And often times, the person repeats it even louder to the frustration of everyone standing around...

No one likes having to repeat things a second time and no one likes to have to yell when talking so the bad habit is quite annoying to everyone.

However, repetition is a part of life when talking to my dad..

And in the book of 1 John, repetition is also a part of life as well..

The apostle John loves to repeat ideas as he writes this first of 3 letters to the church...

Yet, it is not all John's fault because the Holy Spirit inspired him to repeat ideas in this letter over and over...

And repetition is good for us because we are sheep..

We are helpless and dumb creatures that need to be hit over the head with ideas before we get them...

And the idea that John was trying to hit his readers over the head with was this...

Not everyone who calls himself a Christian is in fact a Christian...

Not everyone who claims to speak for Christ speaks for Christ..

Not everyone who comes to church is a part of the church...

Now, John was convicted that his readers were believers...

He wasn't concerned about their salvation, but he was concerned that they were assuming that everyone around them was saved...

And so from the very first verse of this letter, he has given his readers tests of salvation...

Not for them necessarily, but for them to give to the people who were coming to them claiming to be saved...

And John's tests have really fallen into a couple categories...

The first kind of test is what do you believe about Christianity?

For instance, who is Christ?

What did He do?

What is sin?

Are you a sinner?

And the second kind of test was a test of behavior..

What is the pattern of your life?

Is sin the pattern or is righteousness the pattern?

And one other part of this test of behavior was this...

Do you love others and how do you show your love for others?

And so all of John's tests fall into these two categories?

What do you believe and how do you act?

Those are the tests of salvation in 1 John, and John simply moves through this letter and constantly circles back to these two tests..

Tonight, in chapter 1 John chapter 3, we are going to see a repeat of the behavior test of true salvation...

But John is going to add a little more detail to help us as we evaluate others by what they do and how they love....

So, let's get into this text tonight, which I have divided into two sections...

The first section begins in 1 John 3:4 and runs to verse 10...

### **I. Salvation Seen in Practice (4-10)**

Let's read verses 4-10 in 1 John 3..

*4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or [b]knows Him. 7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil [c]has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is [d]born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is [e]born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: [f]anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.*

There are people in the world who claim that Christians are not required to obey God after salvation...

They argue that salvation is simply repentance and confession of Jesus as Lord, and once that has happened a person is saved forevermore...

They would say that a Christian can then live any sort of lifestyle, even a sin filled lifestyle, and it has no bearing on whether they go to heaven or not when they die...

Now, I don't disagree that repentance and trust in Christ are the basis of salvation...

In fact, the Bible says that those things are requirements for salvation...

But here is always the question...

How do you know if someone truly repented and truly believed in Christ?

Even more, how do you know if you truly repented and believed in Christ?

Because we know that we can't even trust our feelings at times...

So, God gives us things to look at in our life and in the lives of others as evidence that our repentance and confession was true...

And one of those evidences is to simply examine your life or the life of someone else after a claim of salvation...

Specifically, we need to examine the practice of someone's life after a claim of salvation...

You see that word practice all over this section of 1 John...

This is the idea of a pattern of life...

Think of it this way...

Doctors have medical practices, which are places where they practice medicine...

Though not everything that happens in the practice is related to the practice of medicine, the overwhelming characteristic of a doctor's office is the practice of medicine...

That is what makes it a medical practice...

If you take away the practice of medicine there, it is not longer a doctor's office...

The same is true for the person who claims to be a Christian...

If they don't practice living like a Christian, they are not a Christian...

It is as simple as that...

Now, like the doctor's office that has other things going on there, there are times that the true Christian doesn't do Christian things.

We all understand that we have a flesh and we experience temptation and sometimes we sin, but even then the sin doesn't become a practice of our life...

We may repeat the same sin, but we are constantly repenting and trying to fight against it..

We don't adopt it as a pattern of life, and we feel remorse anytime we fall into the sin...

That is the pattern of life for the true believer...

His practice is to obey God and do the right thing and stay away from sin...

Now, why is that?

Why do true Christians resist lifestyles of sin?

Why is it the pattern of our lives to put off sin and to put on righteousness?

Well, one reason true believers don't practice sin is this...

*They know it violates the law of God...*

Verse 4...

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness...

True believers try their best to stay away from anything that causes them to offend God, and breaking his law would certainly fall into that category..

Think about all the respect we have for laws in our state and nation.

And because we respect those authorities, we try to obey those laws..

Yet, how much more respect should we have for God's laws and commands....

And how much more should we strive to obey and keep them...

And those who are truly saved try to avoid breaking the law of God...

But another reason that true believers don't fall into a pattern of sin is found in verses 5-9...

***We don't fall into a pattern of sin is because we do the work of Christ and not the work of Satan.***

Look at verse 5....

***5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins***

True believers understand that Christ came into the world to remove sin..

Therefore, in our lives we strive to remove sin as well..

We certainly don't seek to add to the sin in our lives...

This would work contrary to what Jesus had done...

For instance, let's say I really enjoy playing a certain golf course...

It is a nice place that provides a service to me and my family...

It wouldn't make sense to go out to the course and cause destruction to it...

It wouldn't make sense to tear up the greens and destroy the fairways since they are there for my benefit...

And neither does it make sense for people who claim that Jesus has forgiven their sins to go out and live lifestyles of sins..

We don't live in way that is opposed to the work that Jesus did on our behalf..

We put off sin because Jesus put the penalty of sin off of us...

And John even adds this in verse 8...

If you are living in habitual sin, you are not of Jesus but rather a son of the devil who has practiced sin from the very beginning...

A final reason why believers don't continue in sin in found in verse 9...

True believers don't practice sin because he has been reborn with a new nature...

Verse 9..

***9 No one who is [d]born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is [e]born of God.***

When each of us was born, we were born with the inherited fallen nature of Adam..

We were born with a strong desire to sin, and we did sin...

Salvation reverses the curse of Adam as we are now reborn of Christ..

WE are now the seed of Christ and our new birth doesn't push us to sin but away from sin.

Now, we still have the flesh that tempts us to sin, but true believers also have the power of the Holy Spirit to resist sin...

We don't sin because we now have the power to defeat sin ever since our new birth....

And John wraps up this first section of the test of behavior in the first part of verse 10 by simply saying...

***10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: [f]anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God,...***

Once again, in plain-spoken John fashion, John lets us know the results of this test...

If you practice sin, you are of the devil and if you practice righteousness, you are of God..

But John is not done reviewing the test of behavior just yet...

In the last part of verse 10, he reminds us of one other thing to examine in a person's life who claims to be saved...

And this will be the second part of what we look at tonight...

## **II. Salvation Seen in Love (11-24)**

Let's read verses 13-24...

*11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; 12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.*

*13 Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. 15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. 16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his [g]heart [h]against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. 19 We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will [i]assure our heart before Him 20 [j]in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence [k]before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His*

***commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.***

In this final part of chapter 3, John reminds us that love for others is a characteristic of those who are truly saved in this world..

We have already learned this, but John gives us a fuller test this time...

And he starts with the negative side of love in verses 11-17 as he shows us what love for others is not...

First of all, love for others is not shown by the example of Cain, who killed his brother in Genesis 4..

Now, this may sound like an extreme example of not loving your neighbor, but it must be said that those who seek to harm their neighbor are not showing themselves to be lovers of others...

And therefore are not showing themselves to be true believers...

Now, Cain is also a good example to us because on the outside, Cain looked like a true believer...

For instance, he brought a sacrifice to God.

In other words, he probably said that he believed and he even looked like he believed...

But in the end, he wasn't a believer because his actions of killing his brother out of jealousy proved that he was a child of the devil and not of God...

So clearly, murder is not an act of love...

The second failing grade on the test of love would be to hate your brother...

In verses 13-15, John describes the hate that the world has for Christians...

But that should come as no shock because people who aren't truly saved hate believers...

Now, that may sound like a harsh thing to say but it is true...

Cain was Abel's brother, but he hated Abel in his heart and eventually carried that hatred to its worst possible outcome, which is murder...

The world has a similar hatred of believers...

Yet, the same is not true of believers...

Look at verse 14...

***14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.***

Believers love.

And who do we love?

We love the brethren...

We love our brothers and sisters in the Lord...

But we also love others...

If you hate anyone, Jesus calls you a murderer and so does John in verse 15...

And if you have a pattern of hate in your life without repentance, you fail the test of true salvation...

A final way to fail the test of love with regards to true salvation is found in verse 17...

***17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his [g]heart [h]against him, how does the love of God abide in him?***

In other words, if you are a believer and you see a fellow believer in need but refuse to help, it is clear that you don't love your brother...

True love gives to those in the church who have need...

And those without that kind of love for their fellow believers lack evidence of their love for others, and therefore lack evidence of true salvation...

So, love is not seen in practicing the patterns of murder, hatred, and selfishness...

And if those practices are the pattern of someone's life, that someone is not truly saved regardless of what they may say about themselves..

Now that we know what fails the test of love and salvation, let's finish with what passes the test of love and salvation...

Verse 18....

***18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.***

In other words, John would tell us that talk of love is cheap...

Love is not seen in words or even a warm fuzzy felling toward others....

Love is seen in deeds and in truth...

In other words, a claim that you love someone who'll be backed by evidence of what you do for that person...

And also in the truth that you share with that person...

Love does not cause us to be deceitful with others, but to tell them the truth...

And those that pass the test of love here are people whose deeds match up with their tongues...

Saying "I love you" is important, but showing "I love you" is equally important...

And those that truly love their neighbor don't just talk it, they do it...

That is the test of love...

Then John gives us the blessing of passing the the test of love in verses 19-24...

To examination a person and see that they do in fact love others comes with two very important blessings...

The *first* is seen in verse 19...

If you examine yourself and see this kind of love in your heart, you are filled with assurance even when our hearts condemn us, according to verse 20...

Do you know what that means?

It means sometimes that our own hearts can cause us to doubt our salvation...

Sometimes, sin can hinder our relationship to the Lord and fill us with uncertainty.

But if you carefully examine your love for others and find it to be shown through deeds and truth, you can fight off doubt and fear with the assurance of knowing you pass the salvation test of love...

That is why it is so important not to measure our salvation by what we feel, but by the tests of Scripture...

Our hearts can be desperately wicked at times and even condemn us, so we must turn to something outside ourselves to examine if we are saved...

This would even apply to talking to someone about their salvation..

It is best to not ask them if they feel saved or not...

Because feelings are not always reliable, so we need the truth tests of Scripture that stand outside of people's emotions to measure salvation.

And these external tests like the test of love lead to assurance even when we are tempted to doubt...

The *second blessing* of passing the test of love is that we have confidence before God...

Look at verse 21...

***21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence [k]before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.***

If we pass the tests of obedience and love and are assured of our salvation, we can confidently approach God in prayer knowing that he hears us and will answer us in the best way possible...

Folks who aren't truly saved lack assurance and lack confidence to go to God in prayer...

They don't know if they are saved, and therefore they don't know if God even hears their prayers...

What a horrible way to live...

John then moves to the final words of this chapter in verses 23-24, where he gives us a summary of the tests of salvation...

***23 This is His commandment, that we [l]believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He [m]commanded us. 24 The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.***

You see 3 keywords in these two verse regarding who is truly saved or not...

The words are “believe” in verse 23...

“Love” in verse 23...

And “keeps” in verse 24..

The test of salvation that John is calling his readers to give to others is simple...

Examine what they believe...

Examine how the love others...

And examine how they keep the commandments...

And if they pass those tests, they pass the tests of salvation...

And they can be assured that God has saved them, God is answering their prayers, and most importantly that God has forgiven their sins and given them a home in heaven..

### **Conclusion**

What do we take from most of 1 John 3?

#### **#1 - Salvation is obvious.**

We don't need to wring our hands and sweat over whether we are someone we know is saved...

We simply need to examine what they believe, what they do, and if they love others..

John even said in verse 10...

By this, the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious...

#### **#2- Words can be empty.**

Though we have seen and said this before, words alone are not a measure of true salvation..

Just because someone says the right things about Jesus doesn't mean they are saved..

Just because someone says they keep the commands doesn't mean they are saved...

Just because someone says they love their neighbor doesn't mean they are saved...

Words are empty unless they are back up in deeds and truth...

Though words are important and part of true salvation, words alone can be very deceptive...

### **#3 - Testing is necessary.**

If John was concerned about true salvation only 60 years after Jesus ascended back to heaven, how much more should we be concerned about it now?

Unfortunately, the church has let her guard down in regards to true salvation...

Sometimes, it was simply because we wanted the encouragement of adding people to our church rolls and bragging about it to other churches..

Sometimes, we didn't put people to the test of salvation because we didn't want to appear unkind or

stop what someone said God was doing in their life...

Sometimes, it was simply because we were too lazy to guard the church from unbelievers...

And sometimes, it was simply because we didn't know what questions to ask and what tests to put people through...

Yet, testing a person's salvation is a blessing to that person to help them identify if they are saved or not, which is the most important question any person could ask...

But second, testing a person's salvation is a blessing to the church..

To make sure that we guard the church from error and false teaching...

To fail to do that is to dishonor the church for which Jesus died...

And I don't think any of us want to do that...

Let us pray tonight...