

What is Pleasing in His Sight

1 John 3:17-24

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1 John 3:10-16 Summary: Righteousness & love are essentials... loving others matters before God. Love is evidence of being born again. We are called to lay down our lives for the sake of others.

Applications from this passage...

- God wants us to be assured of our salvation.
- Demonstrating righteousness & love assures us of our salvation
- The agape love of God is radically different from the culture's concept of love.

1 John 3:17-18 – What it means to love in real life.

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

What does it mean to love in deed and in truth?

John will not allow us to merely *talk* about love; real love is demonstrated in actions (though it is also often evident in our feelings).

What does it mean to shut up your heart from someone?

If you have the capability to meet a brother's needs, and do nothing to meet those needs, then how can you say you love that brother? How *does the love of God abide in you*?

- Here is a test of this love; if we do not divide our bread with the hungry, we certainly would not lay down our life for him.

What is the limit to the agape love of God?

The only limit is the one that love itself imposes. When giving to a person, if meeting his perceived need, does him harm instead of good — then the loving thing to do is to *not* give him what he asks for, but to instead give him what he really needs.

Can you have a love for humanity but lack a love for humans?

It is easier to be enthusiastic about humanity in general than it is to love individual men and women, especially those who are uninteresting, exasperating, depraved, or otherwise unattractive.

- Loving everybody in general may be an excuse for loving nobody in particular."

1 John 3:19-21 – The assurance this love brings.

And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.

What does it mean to assure our hearts before God?

When we see the agape love of God at work in our lives, we can know that we are *of the truth* — and this brings assurance to our hearts before God, that we are standing in Him.

Why is assurance of salvation essential?

Who wants to wait until it is too late to know if they are really saved or not?

What does it mean that God will assure our hearts before Him?

God *knows all things*, and knows who we truly are in Jesus Christ. If we are born again, then He will help us to be assured we'll be spending eternity with Him...

Romans 8:16 – *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*

What if we have been walking in love, yet our heart still condemns us before God?

John assures us that *God is greater than our heart*, and so reminds us that we cannot base our relationship with Him purely on how we *feel* in His presence.

- Condemnation can well up inside us that has nothing to do with our standing before God.
- It may be the work of the enemy of our souls (who, according to Revelation 12:10 accuses the brethren), or the work of an over-active conscience.

How may we have *confidence toward God*?

When we are in fellowship with God, and *our heart does not condemn us*, we know that we can have confidence toward God and our standing with Him.

- The word rendered *confidence* stood in ancient Greece for the most valued right of a citizen of a free state, to 'speak his mind' unhampered by fear or shame.

1 John 3:22 – Assurance of answered prayer.

And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

How may our prayers be answered?

The person who walks in obedience and love will also experience answered prayer.

- This is not because their love and obedience has *earned* them what they ask, but their love and obedience comes from fellowship — the key to answered prayer.

John seems to be restating Jesus' idea...

John 15:7 — *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*

Why is keeping God's commandments essential for answered prayer?

We should make a distinction between the prayer of the man who is saved, and the cry of the heart seeking mercy from God.

- For the sinner who comes to Jesus in prayer, seeking mercy, the only requirement is sincerity of heart. God does not demand our obedience *before* He saves us.

The key to prayer is being in such close fellowship with God that we ask for the things that are on *His* heart; we take up His agenda with our requests and intercession.

- The spirit of true prayer is *Thy will be done*, not *My will be done*
- We turn to prayer to call into action what God desires; even knowing that some of the things God desires will directly and personally benefit us.

How may we *do those things that are pleasing in His sight*?

The person who is in fellowship with God will want to *do those things that are pleasing in His sight*.

- We should have hearts of gratitude that just want to please the Lord in everything that we do.

Why is it a problem to just do what please ourselves without any regard for pleasing God?

We generally spend way too much of our time seeking to please ourselves without any regard to pleasing the Lord. These motivations do not have to be opposites:

- God is glorified when we enjoy His goodness and His good things.
- Yet, the godly life will have special focus on just pleasing God, even if it doesn't particularly please us at the moment.

1 John 3:23-24 – The commandment of Jesus.

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. 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.

What is the commandment of Jesus?

That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another.

How does this commandment differ from what Jesus said was the greatest commandment?

When Jesus spoke of the greatest commandment:

Matthew 22:37-40 — *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*

If you believe on Jesus Christ, you are loving God; this is one and the same...

John 6:29 — *This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.*

What does it mean to believe on the name of God's Son?

This is not simply believing that Jesus is, or even believing that He did certain things such as die on a cross. To *believe on the name of Jesus* means to put your belief **on** Jesus in the sense of trusting in Him, relying on Him, and clinging to Jesus.

- It isn't about intellectual knowledge or understanding, it is about *trust*.

Who else besides God will Christians love?

And love one another: The second commandment is also a quoting of Jesus...

John 15:12 – *This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*

The love of the brethren is not an option for some Christians; it is a commandment for all.

What does it mean to abide in Jesus?

Those who abide in Jesus know they are abiding in Jesus, because of the presence and assurance of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:16 – *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*

Anyone who belongs to Jesus has the Spirit in him; that indwelling Holy Spirit gives us assurance.

- You can't be abiding in Jesus and not know it, though you may have an attack of doubt.

What is the danger for the one who does not keep the commandments of Jesus?

Such a one will not have confidence that he abides in Jesus.

- And he does not truly have the assurance of the Holy Spirit's presence in his life.

What applications do we see from this discussion?

- Loving others entails loving in deed and truth.
- God wants us to be assured of our salvation.
- Answered prayer and the conviction of the Holy Spirit assures us of our salvation.
- True Christians will love God and fellow Christians.