

TEST 3: BEING MARKED BY LOVE

1 JOHN 03: 10–17

Introduction

Do we really love God? This is the third test that shows us. Are we marked by love? Is love the chief characteristic of our lives? Do we love one another? Love shows us whether or not we love God. God is love; therefore, if we love God, we are bound to love one another. In fact, since God is love, it is absolutely impossible to love God and not to love one another. The greatest proof of all that we love God is the mark of love. If we have the mark of love upon our lives, if people can clearly see that we love one another, then we love God. But if we have and hold feelings against anyone else, this is clear proof that we do not love God. The great mark of loving God is the mark of loving one another.

- I. Love reveals one's true nature: shows that one is either a child of God or of the devil (v. 10).
- II. Love is the message heard from the very beginning (v. 11).
- III. Love does not persecute the righteous (vv. 12-13).
- IV. Love is the proof that one has passed from death to life (v. 14).
- V. Love does not hate (v. 15).
- VI. Love is the proof that one understands the love of Christ (v. 16).
- VII. Love has compassion and gives to meet the needs of people (v. 17).

I. 1 John 03:10 Love Reveals One's True Nature

Love reveals one's true nature; love shows that one is either a child of God or of the devil. Note who it is that is not of God.

=> The person who does not live righteously is not of God. The person who does not live a pure and holy life is not of God.

=> The person who does not love his brother is not of God. The person who mistreats, abuses, ignores, neglects or takes advantage of his brother is not of God.

This is easily seen: God is holy, righteous and pure and God is love. Therefore any person who does not live a holy, righteous and pure life and who does not love could not be of God. His life stands opposed to all that God stands for. The things that he does are not of God; they are not of the nature of God. Now, of whose nature are they? Whose nature is unholy unrighteous, impure; and whose nature is unloving? Not God's nature, but the devil's nature. This is not a pleasant thought, but Scripture declares emphatically that we are either a child of God or of the devil. What determines whose child we are? Our lives reveal exactly whose child we are.

=> The person who lives a righteous life and who loves his brother takes his nature from God.

=> The person who lives an unrighteous life and who mistreats his brother takes his nature from the devil.

We can look at our nature and tell whose child we are. If we live righteous, pure and holy lives and love one another, we have the nature of God. If we live unrighteous, impure and unholy lives and mistreat one another, we have the nature of the devil. It is that clear: there is no middle ground. God's nature is not that of unrighteousness and hate. God is righteous and loving; therefore, the person who lives a righteous life and who loves his brother is of God.

Now, note a significant fact: John defines righteousness as love. This is what he is really saying in this verse: the person who does not do righteousness is the person who does not love his brother. Righteousness is love, and unrighteousness is failing to love. This is seen by scanning this passage:

=> Note verse 12: Cain did not love his brother so he murdered him and did an unrighteous deed.

=> Note verse 14: the proof that we have passed from death to life is our love, our righteous behaviour toward our brother.

=> Note verse 15: love is not unrighteous acts, hate or murder.

=> Note verse 16: love is the righteous act of God in giving His Son to die for us.

=> Note verse 16 again: love is laying down our lives for our brother.

=> Note verse 17: love is compassion and giving to meet the needs of our brother.

The point is this: love is action — righteous deeds in action. And righteousness is love — loving deeds in action. This is exactly what John declared earlier.

1 John 2:10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.

Rom 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

This is also what Paul declared in that memorable passage of Romans, a passage that we should live in and preach and teach as long as we live upon earth.

Rom 13:8-10 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

How do we know if we really love God? We can look at love and tell. Do we love our brothers? Or, do we hold things within us toward others? Do we think evil thoughts about them? Talk about them? Criticize, murmur, grumble, gossip or backbite them?

Do we do evil against them? This is the nature of the devil — to tear down and destroy — not the nature of God. Therefore, if we do these kinds of things, we are revealing that we are not the children of God, but children of the devil. Love reveals whose child we are.

Mat 5:9 “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*”

Mat 22:37-39 *Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”*

John 13:34-35 “*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*”

Rom 12:9 *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*

II. **1 John 03:11 The Supreme Command to Love**

How do we know if we know God? There is a test that shows us: Do we follow after the supreme command, the command to love our neighbours? Note three significant facts.

1. This is not a new command, but an old command. Observe: John does not come right out and say that he is talking about love, not immediately. He says that the command he is about to talk about...

- is not a new command but an old command.
- is the command that they had heard from the beginning of time.

One of the very first things that God ever said to man was this: man must love his neighbour (Lev. 19:18). Why then would John not just go ahead and mention the command? Why take a back-door approach to the subject of love? John had a very good reason: what John is about to say is new, so new that people would say that it was his own idea and not the truth. Therefore, John had to establish the fact that God had said the same thing from the beginning of time. But note a crucial question: If the command of love has been with man from the beginning of time, how can it be a new command? What is there about the command that might upset people and cause them to turn away from John’s exhortation? This is the second thing discussed by John.

2. The command is a new command (v. 8). It is not only an old command but a new command. Again, what is so new about love? Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ gave love a new meaning. Jesus Christ...

- loved not only friends, but enemies.
- loved not only good people, but bad people.
- loved not only the righteous, but the sinner.
- loved not only the acceptable, but the rejected.

- loved not only the clean, but the dirty.

Jesus Christ Himself stated the fact as clearly as it can be stated:

Mat 5:43-45 *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 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.*

This was a totally new concept of love. Man has always felt free to mistreat others, especially those who had mistreated him. He has felt free to...

- hate • criticize • strike back • be unkind • hurt
- backbite • ignore • retaliate • neglect

But Jesus Christ has shown that we cannot mistreat people no matter what they have done, that we must love everyone no matter who they are. Note His words: “That you may be sons of your Father in heaven” (Mt. 5:45). The only way we can become children of God is to love even as God loves. If we do not love, then we do not know God, for God is love. He is the love that loves all people no matter who they are. Note another statement of Jesus Christ:

John 13:34-35 *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

Jesus Christ says an astounding thing: the only way people can tell that we are His disciples is by our love for one another. Our discipleship and our knowledge of God can be measured by whether or not we love our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

This is exactly what John says in verse 8: “A new command; its truth is seen in him [Christ] and you [true believers].” The person who truly follows God has the love of God in him. The love of God dwells not only in Christ but in the believer also.

3. Note another fact about the new command of love. Love is now made known by the true light that shines and erases the darkness (v. 8). “The darkness is passing and the true light is already shining” (v. 8).

The darkness refers to man’s old idea of love, that he could react against anyone who mistreated him. But Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world, has now shone forth the truth. Man is to love his neighbour no matter what the neighbour does. In fact, man is to love all men no matter who they are or what they have done. God is love; therefore man is to be as God: man is to love. It is by his love that man knows whether or not he knows God. No man knows God unless he loves as Christ loves, loves even his enemies.

John 8:12 *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

John 12:35 Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going.

2 Cor 4:6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Eph 5:12 For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.

Isa 9:2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

III. 1 John 03:12–13 Love and Persecution

Love does not persecute the righteous. The extreme case of persecution is used to illustrate the point — that of murder. Cain committed the very first murder on earth: he killed his own brother Abel (Gen. 4:1-15). Why? Because Abel was a believer. Abel believed God, that he was to worship God exactly like God said, by the blood of a sacrificial animal. Cain did not accept such a belief. He felt that if he brought the fruit of his own hands to God, then God would accept him because of his hard work and because he worshipped and gave offerings to God. God accepted Abel’s worship and offering. It was evident in his life, by the way God blessed him and took care of him. But God rejected Cain’s offering. Cain did not have a real sense of God’s care or blessing upon his life. Therefore, he became jealous and envious of Abel and he killed Abel. The point is twofold.

1. First, love does not persecute the righteous. Cain did not love his brother; therefore, he was of that wicked one, the devil, and he persecuted his brother. A person who truly loves his brother will not persecute him; he will not...

- criticize
- stand against
- backbite
- hurt
- censor
- destroy
- murder
- spread rumours
- downgrade
- dislike
- attack
- oppose
- abuse
- talk about
- hate
- be envious

Just think — love means that we will not even dislike another person. We love them, care for them, and reach out to them. We want their fellowship in Christ, longing for them to experience all the richness of life and for them to know all the fullness of Christ and His love. This is the way we know that we love God, if we do not persecute our brother like Cain did.

John 15:12 “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”

Rom 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

Rom 13:8-10 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law. The commandments,

“Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

1 Th 3:2 *We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God’s fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith.*

1 Pet 1:22 *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.*

2. Second, if we love Christ, then the world will persecute us. The world does not know nor understand believers. This explains why believers are ridiculed, mocked, ignored, opposed, abused, rejected and persecuted by the world. The persecution may come at work, at school, in the neighbourhood or anywhere else; the world just does not understand why believers act and live the way they do. The world does not understand...

- why believers separate themselves from the pleasures and things of the world.
- why believers deny themselves and live sacrificially so that they can carry the message of Christ to the world and meet the needs of the desperate.
- why believers go to church so much and talk so much about Christ.

Note why the world does not understand believers: because the world did not know Jesus Christ. Think about it: God’s very own Son came into the world, but the world did not know Him. They wanted nothing to do with Him; they rejected Him. Now if the world rejected Jesus Christ, God’s very own Son, they are bound to reject God’s adopted children. The world is just unwilling to recognize and acknowledge that God is righteous and pure and just. They want nothing to do with a lifestyle that demands all that a person is and has. They are just unwilling to give sacrificially to carry the gospel around the world and to meet the needs of the world. They do not understand the nature of believers — that they are the children of God; that they can live no other life than that of following God. Why? Because believers know God in all of His love and the majesty of His being. This the world cannot understand.

Mat 10:17 *“Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues.”*

Mat 24:9 *“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.”*

Luke 6:22-23 *“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. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.”*

John 15:19 “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.”

John 15:20 “Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.”

Luke 21:17 “All men will hate you because of me.”

John 17:14 “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.”

Phil 1:29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.

1 Th 3:3 So that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them.

2 Tim 3:12 In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Heb 12:3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

1 Pet 4:12-14 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

1 Pet 4:16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.

1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

1 John 3:13 Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you

Psa 119:86 All your commands are trustworthy; help me, for men persecute me without cause.

IV. 1 John 03: 14 Proof of Passing from Death to Life

Love is the proof that one has passed from death to life. Note two things.

1. The death here is spiritual death and eternal death. Spiritual death speaks of a person who is dead while he still lives (1 Tim. 5:6). He is a natural man living in this present world, but he is said to be dead to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God and to spiritual matters.

- a. A person who wastes his life in wild living is spiritually dead.

Luke 15:32 *“But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”*

- b. A person who has not partaken of Christ is spiritually dead.

John 6:53 *Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”*

- c. A person who does not have the spirit of Christ is said to be spiritually dead.

Rom 8:9 *You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

- d. A person who lives in sin is said to be spiritually dead.

Eph 2:1 *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.*

Col 2:13 *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.*

- e. A person who is separated from the life of God is said to be spiritually dead.

Eph 4:18-19 *“They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.” Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*

- f. A person who sleeps in sin is spiritually dead.

Eph 5:14 *For it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”*

- g. A person who lives in sinful pleasure is dead while he lives.

1 Tim 5:6 *But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.*

- h. A person who does not have the Son of God is dead.

1 John 5:12 *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

- i. A person who does great religious works but does the wrong works is dead.

Rev 3:1 *“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.*

2. Love is the proof that we have passed from death over into life. Love is *not* the cause of our passing over into life; it is *the proof* that we have passed from death to life. Jesus Christ is the One who saves us from death and gives us life. But once He has done

this, we love our brothers. And we can know whether or not we have passed from death to life by our love. If we love our brothers — all of them — then we have been saved from death and we have eternal life. If we do not love our brothers, we have not been saved from death and we do not have life. Note what the verse says: we “remain in death.” We dwell, live, move and have our being in death; we have made death our home. We are in the process of dying and we shall die and never receive the life of God, the life that is eternal and that overflows with all the fullness and richness of life. The person who does not love his brother “has not made the passage over”; he is living in an “atmosphere of death” (A. Plummer. *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 22, p. 74).

V. *1 John 03:15 Love, Hate and Murder*

Love does not hate. This should be clearly understood, but it is not. Many people feel that they are acceptable to God and that God will never reject them, yet they have all kinds of negative feelings against others. They have feelings of...

- dislike
- disfavour
- anger
- sourness
- bitterness
- resentment
- envy
- irritability
- jealousy

But note what this verse says: the person who hates his brother is a murderer. Hate is equal to murder; hate is the very same thing as murder. This is exactly what Jesus Christ said:

Mat 5:21-22 “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.”

Anger, bitterness and contempt are just as serious in God’s eyes as murder. Why? Because the person who hates has the very same feelings and spirit that the murderer does — a spirit of anger, bitterness and contempt. The murderer reacts differently, more violently, but the heart of both the hater and murderer is the same. And God looks and judges by the heart. Some persons can camouflage what is in their heart, but not from God. God knows the heart. The *Pulpit Commentary* has an excellent statement on this point:

“Love is the only security against hate. And as every one who does not love is potentially a hater, so every hater is potentially a murderer. A murderer is a hater who expresses his hatred in the most emphatic way. A hater who does not murder abstains for various reasons from this extreme way of expressing his hate. But the temper of the two men is the same” (A. Plummer, *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 22, p. 74).

Note that no murderer has eternal life. The implication is that neither does any person who hates his brother. A person who does not love his brother, who has negative feelings swirling within his heart, who has allowed his heart to become hardened against his

brother — that person does not have eternal life dwelling within him. He has death, separation, alienation, division. He has *cut off* fellowship with a brother; he has *put to death* the relationship that exists between him and his brother. Therefore, he will be cut off from God; his relationship with God is put to death.

1 John 2:9 *Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.*

1 John 3:15 *Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.*

1 John 4:20-21 *If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

Prov 10:12 *Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs.*

VI. 1 John 03:16 Understanding the Love of Jesus Christ

Love proves that one understands the love of Christ. Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And remember when He did it: He died for us...

- when we were still powerless, totally unable to help ourselves or to save ourselves (Rom. 5:6).
- when we were ungodly (Rom. 5:6).
- when we were sinners (Rom. 5:8).
- when we were enemies of God, rebelling, cursing, neglecting, ignoring, denying and rejecting God (Rom. 5:10).

Despite all this, Jesus Christ died for us. He took our sins and the guilt for them upon Himself, and He paid the judgment for them. Jesus Christ died for us. Why? Because He loves us; He loves us enough to die for us even when we oppose and do things against Him and stand against Him.

The point is this: if we love God, then we follow His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We love people just like He did; we love them even when they oppose and do things against us and stand against us. In fact, love is the proof that we really understand the love of Christ. If we love those who do things against us, then we *know* the love of Christ. But if we do not love those who oppose us, we *do not know* the love of Christ. We can prove whether or not we know the love of Christ by our love for others, even for those who do us evil.

"Christ died for those who hated Him; and the Christian must confront the world with a love that is ready even to die for the haters." (A. Plummer, *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 22, p. 74).

John 15:9 *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love."*

John 15:13 “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

Gal 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.

Eph 5:2 And live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

1 Pet 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.

1 John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

VII. **1 John 03:17 Love is Ministering**

Love has compassion and gives to meet the needs of people. This verse is a question, but the answer is clearly seen. Note the words “material possessions.” The meaning is necessities of life, livelihood, the means to sustain life. If we have the bare necessities of life and see a person in need, how can we close our heart against him? How can we shut off feelings for him? How can we keep from helping him and from sharing what we have? If a person does this — if we do this — how can the love of God dwell within us? The answer is clear: the love of God does not exist within a person who does not help those whom he sees in need. No matter what we profess, think or argue, if we are not actively helping and giving — sacrificially giving — to meet the needs of the desperate and needy of our communities and of the world, we do not love God. God loved us: He gave all that He was and had to save us. Therefore, we must love others: we must give all that we *are and have* to save them. If we do not, how can we say that the love of God dwells in us? For this is exactly what Christ did.

Luke 12:33 “Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.”

Acts 20:35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’

Rom 12:13 Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Gal 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

1 Tim 6:17-19 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God,

who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Heb 13:16 *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. ■*