

The Definition And Value Of Brotherly Love

1 John 3:16-24

Study #12

(Not entirely original with me)

INTRODUCTION:

1. John has given us two reasons in **1 Jn 3:10-15** for why it is necessary that we love the brethren...
 - a. Along with practicing righteousness, it distinguishes the children of God
 - b. It signifies a passing from death to life
2. But what does it really mean to love the brethren? And what benefits do we receive in return when we possess brotherly love?

I. THE DEFINITION OF BROTHERLY LOVE (16-18)

A. JESUS EXEMPLIFIES WHAT IT MEANS TO LOVE THE BRETHERN... (16)

1. The word for love (Grk., agape), has often been described as “active goodwill”
2. In giving His life for our sins, Jesus certainly demonstrated goodwill in an active way
3. By meditating upon His example, we are “taught of God to love one another” - cf. **1 Th 4:9**
4. With Jesus’ example, then, we come to understand what brotherly love is all about: sacrificially serving others!
 - a. Therefore we should be willing to lay down our lives for one another
 - b. It may involve “dying” for our brethren; it can also be “living” for them through serving

B. AN EXAMPLE OF FAILING TO SHOW BROTHERLY LOVE... (17)

1. John uses the example of not helping a brother when it is within your power to do so
2. In view of Christ’s love, can we claim to have love if we are not willing to sacrifice for a brother in need?
3. This illustrates that brotherly love is not only being willing to “die” for someone, but willing to “live” for them as well, through active service on their behalf

C. THEREFORE, AN ADMONITION TO “TRUE LOVE”... (18)

1. An admonition prefaced by John’s favorite term of endearment: “My little children”
2. To love, not just in words, but truly, through deeds!

(We see, then, that “brotherly love” which 1- distinguishes the children of God, and 2- signifies one as having passed from death to life, must go beyond the spoken word or occasional hymn. Patterned

after the example of Jesus, “brotherly love” is manifested by what one does, not just by what one says (cf. 1 Co 13:4-8). The blessedness of such love is not only for the recipient, but also for the giver.)

II. THE VALUE OF BROTHERLY LOVE (19-24)

A. IT GIVES ONE ASSURANCE BEFORE GOD... (19-21)

1. Love of the brethren is an indication that one is “of the truth”, just as it was an indication that one had passed from death to life (**1 Jn 3:14**)
2. It is certainly not the only indicator (cf. **1 Jn 3:10**), but it does help to provide one with assurance of being right with God.
3. The importance of such assurance
 - a. If our own hearts condemn us...
 - 1) Because we know we do not love the brethren as we ought
 - 2) Certainly God, who is greater and knows all things, will know of our shortcomings in this area (“**If conscience condemn us in known sin, or the neglect of known duty, God does so too.**” - Matthew Henry)
 - b. But if our hearts **do not** condemn us...
 - 1) Because we are loving the brethren as we know we should
 - 2) This will make us able to approach God with joyful confidence!

B. IT LEADS TO POSITIVE ANSWERS TO PRAYER... (22-23)

1. Our prayers are more likely to be answered according to our requests
2. Because we are keeping the commandments of God (of which loving the brethren is one), and thereby pleasing Him
3. “Commandment-keeping” is a condition upon which God hears prayer, just as it is a condition upon which Christ promises His abiding love - **Jn 15:10**

C. IT ENSURES THAT ONE ABIDES IN CHRIST... (24)

1. Abiding in Christ is contingent upon keeping His commandments (and loving the brethren is certainly one of His commandments) - cf. **Jn 14:23**
2. And how do we know that Christ truly abides in those who keeps His commandments?
 - a. By the Spirit whom Christ has given
 - b. He (the Spirit) reminded the apostles of the key to abiding in Christ - cf. **Jn 14:19-26**

CONCLUSION:

1. Aren't these three blessings what every true Christian desires...?
 - a. Abiding in Christ, and He in us?
 - b. God answering our prayers?
 - c. Confidence concerning our standing before God?

2. For these blessings to be ours...
 - a. We must allow Christ to teach us by His example what it really means to have "brotherly love"
 - b. And then manifest such sacrificial service in our lives!
"My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

Does the love of God abide in you?

(Material from Mark A. Copeland)